Original Paper

The Dialect Features and Distinguish Approach of Scottish English (Note 1)

Wang, Li[1*]

[1] China Fire and Rescue Institute, Beijing, China. ORCID: 0000-0002-1221-5450

[*] Wang, Li, China Fire and Rescue Institute, Beijing, China

Abstract

If standard official language is a glass of water, the dialect is like soup with a flavor of your hometown. The locals in Scotland pride themselves on speaking English with a Scottish accent, but its obscurity always leaves us at a loss. In order to understand Scottish English dialects better, this article first briefly analyzes the language classification in Scotland. Then, using empirical research methods, interviews with the 10 most representative speakers of Scottish English dialects are selected from the eight regions of Scotland. The audio is used as a research corpus. The corpus is 49 minutes and 17 seconds long, with a total number of 9293 words. It focuses on the analysis of the accent, vocabulary, and grammatical structure of the Scottish English dialect. Finally, suggestions are made on Scottish English listening and discerning ability training.

Keywords

Scottish English, dialect, accent, listening

1. Introduction

The more British people we meet, the more we find that the listening problems of accent affect our English listening comprehension. This article first briefly classifies the accents of various regions in the UK, and then analyzes the methods and skills of listening and identifying various English accents to help English learners improve their English listening and speaking communication skills.

Areas with unique accents in the UK include: Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Cornwall, Yorkshire, Norfolk, etc. Urban accents are: Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, Birmingham, Belfast and so on.

Most Britons pride themselves on speaking English with their local accent. According to a survey in 1974, only 3% of Britons use the standard accent (Received Pronunciation), also known as the BBC

accent or the Queen's accent, compared to the more developed Southern England accent as a basis, it has been adopted by many public schools and other academic institutions, among which Oxford University is a typical representative, so it is described as the "elegant" Oxford accent. The users are generally upper-middle class in London, and the more traditional accents in the wealthy areas of west London are clear and easy to understand, and are close to standard accents. There are two standard accents: one is called Conservative Received Pronunciation. The Queen speaks this accent, so it is also called Queen's English. It is generally used by well-educated elderly or old nobles; the other is called Contemporary Received Pronunciation, used by well-educated young people, represented by Hermione Granger, a popular character in "Harry Potter (Part 1)".

East London accents/Cockney accents are second only to standard accents, which originated from the East of London. They used to live in relatively poor people (Sohu.com 2017). Most of the working class in London use "Cockney accents". "-In addition to the difference in accent, Cockney's slang is very distinctive, such as: Apple Cider (spider); Frankie Howard (coward); Spanish Onion (toe cyst); Dead Loss (boss); Watch and Chain (brain); Thick and thin (skin); Life and death (breath); Stick and stones (bones); All behind (blind). East London accent representative: Harry Potter, and East Enders, a famous television serial in London's East End accent.

Estuary English, which refers to the Thames estuary, comes from the London accent, and the use area is located in the southeast of England near London.

West Land accent (West Country), the range of use extends from 50 miles away from the West End of London to the vicinity of Wales. The places with the highest usage rate of West Country accent are Cornwall and Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Bristol.
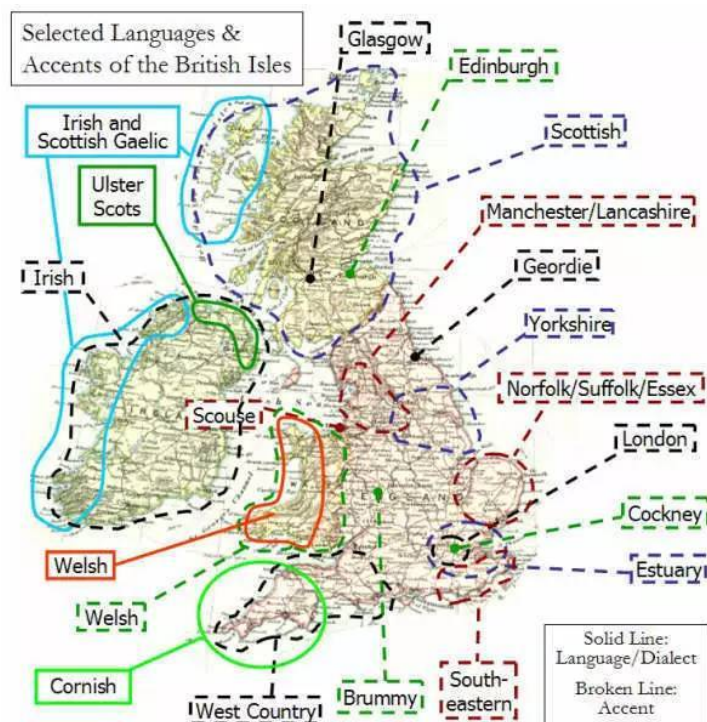
Midlands English (Midlands English), of which the more famous is the Birmingham accent (or Brummie).

Northern England English, distributed in the central and northern regions, such as: Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool. Similar accents can also be heard in the Yorkshire countryside. The central and northern regions have a large number of industrial cities, so this accent represents the working class in the traditional northeastern industrial zone. One of the more distinctive Geordie accents (Geordie), originated in Newcastle, located in the northeast of England.

Welsh English mainly has Welsh pronunciation characteristics.

Irish English's speaking speed is generally faster than other parts of the United Kingdom, the end sound is habitually rising, and the pitch shift range is large. (Zhihu.com, 2020)

Scottish English refers to the English accent used throughout Scotland. It is worth noting that the Scottish English accent is not the accent of Scots. Scots is an independent language, derived from the Kingdom of Northumbria in the Old English period.

Figure 1. British English Accent

Source: Sohu.com, 2021.

According to Eurostat, in 2019, the population of Scotland was 5.454 million. (Eurostat, 2020) In the United Kingdom, the total population of Scotland is second only to England. Scotland's world-renowned universities such as the University of Edinburgh, the University of St. Andrews, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Aberdeen have extensive educational exchanges with my country. However, in Ladegaard's research, the proportion of international students who have lived in Scotland for a year can only correctly identify Scottish accents by 25% (Ladegaard, 1998, pp. 251-274). The Scottish English accent is recognized as the most difficult to understand English, so this article mainly analyzes the dialect features and listening methods of Scottish English.

2. Classification of Scottish Dialects (Robinson J., 2019)

Although the Union Act of 1707 declared English as the official written language of Scotland, the history of spoken Scottish English is more complicated. There are many dialects and older languages in Scotland, which are mainly divided into three categories: Scottish Gaelic, Scottish English, and Scotts.

2.1 Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is not a required subject in most schools in Scotland. Moreover, the Gaelic region has been geographically confined to the Highlands and West Island regions. The language suffered catastrophic destruction due to the expulsion of large numbers of Gaelic tenant farmers (Highland Clearance) in the 18th century from 1750 to 1860. Gaelic is still the language of certain parts of

47

Scotland such as the Hebrides.

2.2 Scottish English

Since the merger of the Parliament of Scotland and the Parliament of England into the Parliament of Great Britain in 1707, the official written language of Scotland has been consistent with the English language. Standard English is used as the language of religion, education, and government. The users are mainly well-educated middle and upper classes in England. However, Standard English has little influence on the Scottish accent. The accent, vocabulary, and grammatical structure of Standard English of Scotland have a large number of characteristic elements of Scottish dialect. That is why we feel that the accent of Scottish English is very difficult to understand.

2.3 Scottish Dialect

The local language of Scotland, Scots (a dialect derived from Old English that originated in Northumberland) has always maintained a strong influence, especially in rural communities. For many years, linguists have been arguing fiercely about whether Scots language itself constitutes a dialect or a unique language. Recently, it has been officially classified as a "traditional language" by the Scottish administration and recognized by the "European Regional or Minority Language Charter", but even in Scotland, experts still have differences on this issue. Regardless of its status, whether it is language or dialect, a large number of Scots will definitely speak Scots instead of English.

2.4 Blurred Boundaries

In fact, the distinction between someone who speaks Scots and someone who speaks Standard Scottish English is quite fuzzy. In some cases, we may be able to classify him immediately based on which voice he or she speaks, but usually (especially in urban areas), the speaker tends to wander between the two options based on the context. In other words, they may speak standard English with the characteristics of the local Scots dialect, for example: say "wee" instead of "little", or use the grammatical structure of Scots and say "does nae" instead of saying "doesn't".

3. Research Methods

3.1 Definition of Dialect

3.1.1 "Dialects" of Chinese

In the nineteenth century, the "dialect" in Chinese meant the languages of various places. It included not only the various Chinese dialects in the present sense, but also the minority languages in China, and was even used to refer to foreign languages. Later, the meaning of the word was reduced to only refer to the local Chinese dialects in various places; in the last century, with the rise of modern Chinese linguistics, experts used traditional words to give "dialects" a scientific definition, such as "a language that is different from the standard language.", Words that are only used in one area, such as the Cantonese dialect and Wu dialect of Chinese". (Lu Guoyao, 1992, pp. 126-136)

3.1.2 The "Dialect" of English (Dialect)

English dialect is a variant of English. The main differences between each English variant are in three aspects: vocabulary, phonetics (pronunciation) and grammar (structure) (Robinson, 2015, p. 7).

3.2 Source and Selection of Corpus

The source of the audio corpus of this research is the audio data of the largest official British accent survey project (1998-2010) hosted by Jonathan Robinson of the British National Broadcasting Corporation. The Scottish English corpus involved in the data is based on the regional differences of Scottish dialects. Divided into eight categories: Shetland Islands, Aberdeen shire, Scottish Highlands, Doric, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Ayrshire, Scottish Borders. The spoken audio of the 10 most representative speakers of Scottish English dialects were selected from these 8 regions as the research corpus, of which 3 speakers were all from Ayrshire. There are 2 female speakers and 8 male speakers.

The 10 corpus has a total duration of 49 minutes and 17 seconds, the longest corpus has a duration of 5 minutes and 54 seconds, and the shortest corpus has a duration of 3 minutes and 31 seconds. The audio content is an impromptu dialogue with no manuscript prepared in advance. Topics involve geography, economy, traditional games, work experience, study, life, social changes, personal experience, etc. The total number of words in the audio transcript is 9293 words, the corpus with the most words is 1,360 words, and the corpus with the least words is 606 words. The audio text is provided by the BBC Company.

3.3 Method

According to the definition of English dialect, this research mainly analyzes the three characteristics of Scottish English: pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar (structure).

The first step is data screening and recording. The text content classified according to the region will be listened to the audio repeatedly, the pronunciation of Scottish English dialect is different from the standard English (RP) pronunciation in the phonetic table (Table 1), while spelling and words different from standard English is recorded in the vocabulary, and special grammatical structures are recorded separately in the grammar list.

The second step is data analysis and research results. According to the pronunciation characteristics, reclassify the records in the phonetic table (Table 2), analyze and summarize the pronunciation characteristics of Scottish English. In terms of vocabulary, extract the Scottish dialect vocabulary from Robinson's (Robinson, 2015) English dialect vocabulary, and combine it with the vocabulary compiled in the first step (Table 3) to sort out the vocabulary characteristics of Scottish English. In terms of grammar, combine the grammar table recorded in the first step with the brief description of this phonetic survey by the BBC to sort out and determine the grammatical characteristics of Scottish English.

The third step is to provide the suggestions for training methods. Aiming at the characteristics of the Scottish English dialect, according to the actual training resource acquisition, design training methods for English as second language learners to improve the listening and discerning ability of Scottish

49

English dialects.

4. Features of Scottish English Dialect

4.1 Voice Intonation

Table 1. Part of Phonetic of Scottish English Dialect Corpus ("Scots" Stands for the Pronunciation of Scottish English, "RP" Stands for the Pronunciation of Standard English)

Location	Scottish pronunciation	Word	Pronunciation comparison
Shetland Islands	/hiv/	have	
Ayrshire	/ˈmaɪneɪdʒə/	manager	Scots /ɪ/ /aɪ//a/-RP/æ/
Scottish Borders	/man/	man	
Shetland Islands	/geɪ/	go	Scots /eɪ//ʊ/ -RP /əʊ/
Aberdeenshire	/ˈsi:lbʊts/	sailboats	
Shetland Islands	/seɪs/	says	Scots /eɪ/ -RP /e/
East Ayrshire	/beɪd/	bed	
Shetland Islands	/əʊt/	out	Scots /əʊ/ -RP /au/
Glasgow	/ɔl/	all	Scots /ʊ//ə//ə/ -RP /ɔ:/
Glasgow	/blɔt/	brought	
Scottish Highlands	/ˈveli/	very	Scots /l/ -RP: /r/ (before a vowel)
Glasgow	/ˈhɪlə/	here	
East Ayrshire	/leˈdan/	return	
Edinburgh	/ˈmɔrnɪn/	morning	Scots /r/ -RP: letter "r" after a vowel
Scottish Highlands	/ˈsglimɪ/	screaming	Scots omit -RP /ŋ/
Shetland Islands ; Ayrshire	Op /ɒp/	Up	Scots /ɒ/ -RP /ʌ/
Shetland Islands	/sem/	same	Scots /e/ / ɪ/-RP /eɪ/
Scottish Highlands	/glɪt/	great	
Aberdeenshire	/hɪərd/	heard	
Doric	/ˈpɪərsən/	person	Scots /ɪər//e//a/ -RP /ə:/
Scottish Borders	/kerk/	kirk	
Aberdeenshire	/ðes/	this	Scots /e/ -RP /ɪ/
Glasgow	/ef/	if	
East Ayrshire	/θlu/	through	Scots /u/ -RP /u:/
East Ayrshire	/klik/	cleek	Scots /i/ -RP /i:/

Aberdeen shire	/tɪm/	time	Scots /ɪ//eɪ/ -RP /aɪ/
Doric	/feɪn/	fine	
Ayrshire	/den/	ten	Scots /d/ -RP /t/
Scottish Borders	/bʌt/	part	Scots /b/ -RP /p/
Ayrshire	/waʃ/	wash	Scots /a/ -RP /ɔ/
Scottish Highlands	/ʃlɒŋ/	strong	Scots /ʃ/ -RP /s/
Scottish Highlands	/zlɪŋk/	drink /drɪŋk/	Scots /zl/ -RP /dr/
Scottish Highlands	/ɑh/	och	Scots /h/ -RP /k/
Doric	/fet/	what	Scots /f//hw/ -RP /w/
Glasgow	/hweə/	where	

Table 2. Comparison of Phonetic Features of Scottish English Dialect and Standard English ("Scots" Stands for the Pronunciation of Scottish English, "RP" Stands for the Pronunciation of Standard English)

No.	Characteristics	Location: Examples /Scottish English pronunciation of the underlined part/
1	RP/æ/ - Scots /ɪ/ /aɪ//a/	(1) Shetland Islands: have /ɪ/, hang/ɪ/ (2) Ayrshire: manager/aɪ/ (3) Others: back/a/, carried/a/, pack/a/, man/a/, bad/a/, gas/a/
2	RP /əʊ/ - Scots /eɪ//ʊ/	(1) Shetland Islands: go/eɪ/, clothes/eɪ/; (2) Other: sailboats/ʊ/, promote/ʊ/, through/ʊ/
3	RP /e/ - Scots /eɪ/	shed/eɪ/, head/eɪ/, west/eɪ/, says/eɪ/, bed/eɪ/
4	RP /au/ - Scots /əʊ/	out, allow, how, outdoor, down, town, found, ground, brown/əʊ/
5	RP / ɔ / -Scots /əʊ/	got/əʊ/
6	RP /ɔ:/ -Scots /ʊ//ɔ//ə/	outdoor/ʊ/, born/ɔ/, all/ɔ/, brought/ɔ/, four/ ə/
7	RP: /r/ before a vowel - Scots /l/	country, dress, desperation, Referee, very, primary, strong/θl/, promote, friend, draw, screaming, natural, farm/fɑ'ləm/, born/'bɔ'lən/, trade, carried, troch, tractor, brought, here/'hɪ'lə/, deep-rooted, return, through/θlu/, try/θle/, wrong/lɒŋ/, rope, pride, brother, different, world/'wɜ'lɔd/
8	RP: letter "r" after a vowel -Scots /r/	first, morning, certain, Peevers, square
9	RP /ŋ/ -Scots omit	Screaming/'sglimɪ/

51

10	RP /a:/ -Scots /a/	Part/bat/
11	RP /ʌ/-Scots /ɒ/	up
12	RP /eɪ/-Scots /e/ /i://ɪ/	same/e/, navy/e/, sailboats /i:/, great/ɪ/, players/ɪ/, maybe/e/, trade/ɪ/, again/ɪ/, chain/ɪ/
13	RP /ə:/ -Scots /ɪə//e//a/	(1) heard/ɪə/, person/ɪə/, serve/ɪə/, certain/ɪə/ (2) Scottish Borders: kirk/e/ (3) East Ayrshire: return/a/
14	Scots /e/ -RP /ɪ/	this, drifter, if, shift, big, return, different, six, in, skip
15	Scots /u/ (short vowel) -RP /u:/	root/lut/, through/θlu/
16	Scots /i/ (short vowel) -RP /i:/	sheep, be, cleek, deep
17	Scots /ɪ//eɪ/ /e/ -RP /aɪ/	(1) /ɪ/: time, while, kind, mine (2) /eɪ/ fine, miner, side, wide, line (3) /e/: try, pride
18	Scots /d/ (Turbidity) -RP /t/	tied, ten, certain, until
19	Scots /b/ (Turbidity) -RP /p/	point, part
20	Scots /a/ -RP /ɔ/	wash
21	Scots /ʃ/ -RP /s/	's, players, strong
22	Scots /h/ -RP /k/	och/ɑh/
23	Scots /f//hw/ -RP /w/	(1) Glasgow: where/hw/ (2) Doric: what /f/
24	Scots /zl/ -RP /dr/	draw, drink

The pronunciation of Scottish English mainly differs in the length of the vowels. The long vowels in standard English have short vowels in Scottish English. For example, in Scottish English, the pronunciation of *pull* and *pool* are the same, and the vowels of *good and food* are all short sounds.

Another distinguishing feature of Scottish English is that the letter combination *wh* is pronounced /hw/ in a word.

The pronunciation of /r/ is very special, the tip of the tongue is raised to the upper jaw, and the side of the tongue is curled up and inward. The letter *r* before the vowel is pronounced /l/, and the letter *r* after the vowel of each syllable is pronounced clearly /r/, which sounds a bit more like a tongue curling than Beijing dialect pronunciation.

The numbers *yin* (one), *twa* (two), four and seven are particularly interesting. They reflect the Germanic tradition of English. The numbers *yin* and *twa* are derived from Old High German.

There may be two or more typical pronunciations of the same word in Scottish English. For example, the speaker in the corpus used the word *any* in two different ways during the interview.

In terms of intonation, the intonation of Scottish English is very special, and the flat syllables of

standard English are often pronounced as rising.

4.2 Vocabulary

Table 3. Comparison of Scottish English Dialect Vocabulary and Standard English Vocabulary ("Scots" Stands for Scottish English Vocabulary, "RP" Stands for Standard English Vocabulary)

Location	Scots	RP
Shetland Islands	peerie	little
Shetland Islands; Ayrshire	folk	people
Shetland Islands	bairn	child
Shetland Islands	jarl	earl
(widely used)	aye	yes
(widely used)	cannae	can not
(widely used)	hame	home
(widely used)	Stay	live
(widely used)	dae	do
(widely used)	maest	most
(widely used)	gae	go
(widely used)	byre	cowshed
(widely used)	troch	trough
(widely used)	likesae	for example
Ayrshire	wee	little; small
(widely used)	nae/nɪe/	bad, no
Ayrshire	land in	arrive
Ayrshire	road	way
Ayrshire	fae	from
Ayrshire	gie	give
Ayrshire	yin	one
Ayrshire	twa	two
Ayrshire	ken	know
Scotish borders	yet	still
Scotish borders	now	formerly
Scotish borders	mebbe	perhaps
Scotish borders	kirk	church
Scotish borders	peevers orbeds	hopscotch
Glasgow	barmpot	n. fool (used affectionately).

(widely used)	fankle	v. to tangle, entangle
(widely used)	minging	adj. dirty, smelly, disgusting, (and by extension) physically unattractive, ugly
(widely used)	oxter	n. armpit
(widely used)	shilpit	adj. weak, sickly-looking, feeble
Aberdeen	fushionless	adj. physically weak, lacking in stamina or energy
(widely used)	wabbit	adj. exhausted, tired out
(widely used)	rowie	n. bread roll
South Scotland	guddle	v. to rummage about
Scottish Borders	howfing	adj. physically unattractive, ugly
Ayrshire	numpty	n. fool (used affectionately)
Scotland	Seri-for-really	Phr. Serious, genuine
(widely used)	stocious	drunk
(widely used)	stramash	n. uproar, row
(widely used)	swither	v. to be undecided, hesitate

4.3 Syntax

Scottish English is basically the same as standard English in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Only a few Scottish characteristic structures.

4.3.1 Use Nae or No as Negative Words

Using nae or no as a negative word is a typical grammatical structure used by Scots. For example, the speaker in Glasgow used the negative word nae, which is widely used in Scotland, for example: nae luck means bad luck. Another example: Scots use nae/no in *nae cash*, *nae wash* and *I'll no mention any names* in place of *not* in standard Scottish English.

4.3.2 Omit the Preposition "of"

The grammatical structure of omitting the preposition "of" is widely used throughout Scotland. For example: *He was haeing a wee _ bit heart problem.*

5. Suggestions on Listening Training Methods

There are a lot of online resources about Scottish English accents, but most of them are short videos of a few minutes, except for very few producers who are English teachers. In order to increase the number of clicks, the producers are called Scottish English Accent Teaching, which is actually just to show limited examples for entertainment. A few examples of sexual show, the characteristics of the so-called summary are very one-sided, only one or two characteristics are mentioned, and the video content is highly repetitive. Generally speaking, these small online teaching videos neither systematically summarize the characteristics of Scottish English accents, nor provide a large amount of corpus for

listening training, let alone summarize the vocabulary and grammatical characteristics of Scottish English dialects, and cannot be used as tutorials to fully understand Scottish English dialects.

However, the image of the online video is vivid, and the speakers are British who are familiar with Scottish English accent. It is suitable for use as a listening material with the characteristics of the dialect summarized in this article.

Video materials for practicing Scottish English accent listening include: BBC Radio Scotland; Glasgow accent Scottish stand-up comedian Kevin Bridges, Glasgow accent Scottish actor James McAvoy, Glasgow accent Scottish singer and stand-up comedian Sir Billy Connolly, Aberdeen/East Coast Scottish Chief Minister of Scotland and Strathclyde University Economics Professor Alex Salmond and other famous persons interview audio and video. The film and television works with a relatively concentrated Scottish English accent include "Brave Heart" and "Trainspotting".

6. Limitations

This article analyzes the listening comprehension methods and skills of Scotland dialects and accents, which are recognized as the most difficult local accent in the UK. The English dialects and accents in other regions are not involved.

Acknowledgement

References

British Library. (2021). *British Accents and Dialects*. Retrieved from https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/collection-items

Eurostat. (2019). *"2019 Census" [OL]*. Retrieved from https://ecas.ec.europa.eu/cas/login?loginRequestId=ECAS_LR-49065157-l2qXvGqJkfSYf5Kvi9S szasXMzdeSSeAi9CLFLZhmbgo5uVWmYzsua7zP1g3VpdASe1hJY65iK2kmZPrdCu20zJ-yntOf 97TTHqpWj1k3JizzhW-Oq6qKGhYbbsQZwhScKR71MtbhQ204RkbzMjNiuJxduFLgxZm270xT OTKgIDfBKv29LbSlrVJxYTRDIwbFMCcBa

Ladegaard, H. J. (1998). National stereotypes and language attitudes: The perception of British. American and Australian language and culture in Denmark. *Language and Communication*, (18), 251-274. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(98)00008-1

Lu, G. Y. (1992). "The Meaning of 'Dialect'". *Language Teaching and Research*, (1), 126-136.

Robinson, J. (2015). *Evolving English Wordbank*. Bradwell Books: 7.

Robinson, J. (2019). Accents and dialects of Scotland, British Accents and Dialects Collection [OL]. *Theme: Diverse voices: Varieties of English in the UK. British Library*. Retrieved from https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/glasgow-accent-cormack-butlins-redcoat

Sohu.com. (2017). *London accent, Oxford accent...7 best British accents, which one do you like?"*.

55

Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/191973999_662097

Sohu.com. (2021). *Do you know why all BBC TV shows are subtitled?* [OL]. Retrieved from https://m.sohu.com/n/478452750

Zhihu.com. (2020). *What is the standard English accent; RP accent; London accent?* [OL]. Retrieved from https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/116834918

Note