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ACCENTS AND DIALECTS IN BRITISH ENGLISH

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The relevance of the thesis is due to the growing need for English as one of the key means of international communication. English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. It is the native language of 380 million people, and about 1.5 billion more people speak English as a foreign language. However, many people experience difficulties when communicating with native English speakers, in particular due to the great number of dialects and accents. Even though people have well-developed grammatical and speaking skills with rich vocabulary, they often cannot understand an interlocutor from the UK, especially from its certain regions, where pronunciation, intonation and even a set of words can differ significantly from generally accepted English standards. This fact creates additional obstacles and barriers in intercultural communication and emphasizes the importance of studying varieties of dialects in the process of learning languages.

Analysis and study of dialects within the history of any language is extremely important. From a historical point of view, it allows to dive deeper into the origins and evolution of the language, from a theoretical point of view, it allows to better understand the process of its formation; from a practical point of view, it expands and improves the skills of using language as a communication tool.

To begin with, it is important to dwell on the meaning of a ‘dialect’ as a linguistic category. Scientists define dialect as a set of words and expressions that does not correspond to the norms of modern literary language and is used mainly in certain regions or among certain groups of people. Due to this, dialects can be commonly or rarely used depending on the level of their prevalence: whether they are known to the majority of native speakers or inherent only in certain regions. Moreover, dialect uses an emotionally coloured vocabulary, which serves as one of its main characteristics: words and expressions of dialectical vocabulary can have different shades – from ironic or humorous to rude or contemptuous. Upon the whole, dialects are a vivid example of constant changes in the life of society.

All the dialects in British English are compared to Received Pronunciation (or "RP accent") that refers to a standard accent often associated with educated people (in positions of power, authority, responsibility, after studying in Cambridge or Oxford Universities) and the areas of London and the South of England. It’s a kind of an accent one can hear watching BBC television programs or listening to BBC radio. However, the strange thing is that only a small percentage in Britain do speak with this accent, apparently 3%. While dialect refers to a whole group of language features, including pronunciation, differences in vocabulary, grammar, and how the language gets used, accent refers to pronunciation. It is distinguished about 11 main dialects inherent in the modern English language. Within the framework of this work, we’ll touch upon three the most common: Cockney English, Liverpool English and West Midlands.

As for the dialect called Cockney, it is considered as the traditional working-class accent, mainly associated with the eastern areas of London, so local London accent and it tends to spread further out to places like Kent, Essex, Surrey. It distinguishes among the others as a colourful, recognizable dialect with a strong accent that has an important cultural value in Britain: it can now be heard in British films, TV shows and music. Its main features are:

a) swallowing: the sound /t/ is often replaced by a glottal stop and is missing to be pronounced. For example, butter - /ˈbʌʔə/; computer – /kompju: ʔə/). A glottal stop is a consonant sound produced by shortly stopping and releasing the flow of air at the glottis (the space between the vocal cords). In essence, it's a brief "stopping" of breath during speech, like the sound in the middle of "uh-oh" or the

sound some British speakers use in words like "bottle". The glottal stop was not characteristic of RP, but it's now a very common syllable-final form of /t/. Today it's entirely standard to replace syllable-final [t] with [ə] before a consonant, whether the consonant is in the same word or not;

b) vowel substitution: the change of the diphthong /aɪ / → /ɔɪ/ sound in words like "time" → /tɔɪm/;

c) replacement of interdental sounds: /θ / → /f/ (think is pronounced like – /fink/; three – /fri/); also /ð / → /v/ (e.g. brother – /bruvver/; with – /wivv/; together – /togeva/). There can happen a confusion, for example, in the sentence: «We are having three people for dinner», where the word «three» will phonetically sound like /fri:/, but the word 'free' has the meaning in itself;

d) onomatopoeia of the sound /l/ means that in their speach the sound /l/ at the end of a syllable can sound like a semivowel or /w/ (for example, milk - /miwk/; Wales – /wowz/);

e) missing the sound /h/ in the beginning of the word: the name Harry will be pronounced like /æri/, the verb to have – /æv/;

f) the presence of rhyming slang is a unique feature of this dialect, the use of familiar words to produce rhyming expressions. Often, only the first words remain during communication, which makes understanding even more difficult (for example, "dog and bone" = phone // "I'm on the dog" → "I'm on the phone")...

e) doubling negation – Double or even triple negation is often used to reinforce (e.g., they are used to say: «I didn't do nothing» instead of «I didn't do anything».

The Liverpool accent is prevailing mainly in the city itself and the surrounding urban areas. It is also widespread in the cities located opposite across the Mersey River. This northern origin accent differs significantly from other urban accents in England. It is due to the influence of numerous Irish settlers, especially from southern Ireland, who settled in the city during the XIX and XX centuries. This accent is also called «Scouse» that comes from the word «lobscouse», a traditional dish of sailors that was habitually eaten in ports. Therefore, the word passed to refer to the residents of Liverpool themselves. Its main features are as follows:

a) glottation: sound /t/ is often softened (e.g. "bottle" → /ˈbɒʔl/);

b) strong articulation and pronunciation of throat sounds: sounds /k/ and /g/ are pronounced with a characteristic throat stress, and are pronounced as /x/ (for example, "cake" → /kɛːkx/);

c) unusual pronunciation of short vowels: "cup" → /kʊp/ or even /kəp/ and "bus" → /bʊs/ with a very dark /ʊ/;

d) higher vowel sounds: in the most words vowels in this dialect can sound higher than in standard pronunciation (e.g. "book" → /bɪk/ and "look" → /lɪk/);

e) lexical features: the word «boss» is a local synonym for "cool" or "wonderful" (*e.g.,* That game was boss! → That game was cool!). Expression «made up» means «very happy» or «happy» (*e.g.,* «I'm made up with me new job» means «I'm very happy about my new job». The classical preposition «with» is also changed in this dialect to «about»). The same goes with the usage of preposition «me» instead of «my» - (*e.g.,* Me mum's boss → My mom is cool.)

One more dialect to consider is West Midlands, which dates back to the industrial cities of the XIX century that gave the dialect a strong sociolinguistic identity. This dialect is common for the regions of the west-central England, namely Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Shrewsbury and Wolchester. It's main features are:

a) soft intonation: the tone of voice is slightly lowered, sometimes monotonous (*e.g.,* one of the most famous bearers of this accent is Ozzy Osbourne of the band *Black Sabbath*, since he was born in Birmingham itself).

b) slow speech: the rhythm is slower than in Cockney or Scouse, with a characteristic pulling tempo.

c) the peculiarity of pronouncing consonants: nasal soud /ŋ/ → is often pronounced as /ŋg/, here we can hear that the sound /g/ is added in the end of the word (*e.g.,* «sigh» → /sɪŋg/, «long» → /lɒŋg/);

d) the voiceless sound /k/ at the end of words often sounds deaf, hoarse, or even fricative, like

sound /x/ (*e.g.*, «back» → /bax/);

e) the absence of the /h/ sound at the beginning of the word → the same feature in the most dialects when /h/ sound disappears (*e.g.* hello → /elo/).

Within the framework of this study, three illustrative examples of English dialects were considered - Cockney, Liverpool (Scouse) and West Midland. Each of them has its own unique features: sound, vocabulary, grammatical structures formed under the influence of historical events, geographical features and social processes. These dialects have not lost their significance and continue to influence the modern English language. The study of dialects is of great importance in linguistic science, since it allows to get to know the internal organization of the language more deeply, as well as access the real linguistic environment. Moreover, knowledge of dialects improves the quality of intercultural communication, develops linguistic intuition and contributes to a general understanding of language as a dynamic and living phenomenon.

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