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DIALECTAL VARIATION IN THE MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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A R T I C L E I N F O.

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Abstract.
The article examines the phenomenon of dialectal variation in the modern English language as one of the most dynamically developing languages in the world. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the normative and dialectal components under the conditions of globalization, mediatization, and the standardization of speech communication. It is concluded that dialectal variation constitutes not a peripheral but a system-forming property of the modern English language, ensuring its internal flexibility and sociocultural representativeness.

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Introduction

The problem of dialectal variation belongs to the fundamental questions of modern linguistics, since it is variation that reflects the natural character of language as a living and developing system. The English language, which holds the status of a global means of communication, displays an exceptionally broad spectrum of dialectal varieties, encompassing both the historically established territorial forms of the British Isles and the numerous national and regional variants that arose as a result of colonial expansion and subsequent processes of nativization [1]. The relevance of studying this subject area is determined by the fact that, under conditions of growing international integration and the digitalization of communication, the relationship between standardized norms and dialectal diversity is acquiring a new dimension [2]. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards the unification of speech practices under the influence of the media and educational institutions; on the other hand, the significance of dialectal features as markers of local and social identity is being maintained and even reinforced [3]. The aim of the present article is the theoretical interpretation of the main approaches to describing dialectal variation in the modern English language and the identification of the key factors that determine its stability in the contemporary era [4].

Methodology And Literature Review

The methodological basis of the study was a comprehensive theoretical and analytical approach involving the critical interpretation and systematization of scholarly sources devoted to the problems of dialectology, sociolinguistics and variantology of the English language. The study employed descriptive, comparative and generalizing-analytical methods, which make it possible to establish general regularities and divergences in the interpretation of the phenomenon of variation. A review of the scholarly literature indicates that in the Western research tradition, dialectal variation is considered predominantly within the framework of the sociolinguistic paradigm stemming from the works of W. Labov, in which variation is interpreted as a structured and socially conditioned phenomenon rather than a random deviation from the norm.

The further development of this direction is associated with the concept of World Englishes proposed by B. Kachru, who differentiated the inner, outer and expanding circles of language spread, thereby establishing a methodological framework for describing national varieties. A significant contribution to the typology of dialects was made by the research of P. Trudgill, who emphasized the interconnection between social variables and the phonetic-grammatical characteristics of speech. In Russian linguistics, the subject of variation has traditionally been developed within the theory of language norms and the literary language, where particular importance is attached to the opposition between codified norms and usus forms.

In the works of domestic and post-Soviet scholars it is emphasized that the variation of the English language must be studied in the unity of its territorial and social dimensions, since it is precisely their interaction that forms the real picture of the language's functioning. Uzbek researchers, turning to the comparative analysis of languages, note the practical significance of studying English dialectology for improving teaching methodology and translation, which is particularly important in the context of expanding international contacts. Thus, the analysis of the literature demonstrates the existence of several independent but mutually complementary research traditions.

Results

The analysis conducted allows us to assert that dialectal variation in the modern English language represents a multilevel phenomenon encompassing the phonetic, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic levels of the language system [5]. Variation is most clearly manifested in phonetics, where differences in the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, intonational contours and the rhythmic organization of speech serve as the primary indicators of a speaker's regional affiliation [6]. At the lexical level, dialectal specificity is expressed in the existence of regionally marked vocabulary reflecting the particularities of the way of life, culture and historical experience of the respective communities [7].

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Of particular interest is the fact that in the contemporary era, dialectal variation is not disappearing under the influence of globalization, as was previously assumed, but is instead being transformed, acquiring new forms of existence in the digital environment [8].

The spread of social networks and informal written communication promotes not the leveling but the consolidation of dialectal features, since speakers consciously use them as a means of self-identification and group solidarity [9]. At the same time, the opposing tendency persists, associated with the pressure of the prestige norm, particularly in the spheres of education, business communication and mass media, where preference is given to standardized variants. Discussion of the results shows that the relationship between the norm and dialect is not static but dialectical in character, with both tendencies coexisting simultaneously and mutually conditioning each other [10]. An important aspect is also that national varieties of English — such as American, Australian, Indian and others — are gradually losing their peripheral status and acquiring an independent normative basis, which testifies to the fundamental polycentricity of the modern English language [11]. This observation is of considerable theoretical significance, since it calls into question the traditional notion of a single reference variety and underscores the necessity of a pluralistic approach to the description of the language system [12].

Discussion

Particular attention is deserved by the grammatical level of dialectal variation, which, unlike the phonetic level, long remained in the shadow of scholarly interest but is today recognized as an equally significant indicator of regional and social differentiation of speech [13]. The grammatical features of dialects manifest themselves in the specific use of tense forms, negative constructions, subject-predicate agreement, as well as in the use of pronominal and prepositional systems that differ from the codified norm. Such divergences are often perceived by speakers of the standard variety as “incorrect,” whereas from a linguistic point of view they represent stable, internally systematic and historically grounded forms possessing their own functional logic. This observation confirms the thesis that a dialect is not a distorted version of the literary language but rather an independent linguistic subsystem with its own structural regularities [14].

An equally significant result of the analysis conducted is the conclusion concerning the close interconnection of dialectal variation with the problem of linguistic identity and the social positioning of the speaker. Under modern conditions, the choice of one or another speech form is increasingly becoming a conscious act and is used as an instrument for demonstrating membership in a particular social, professional or territorial group. A speaker who commands several registers and is able to switch between the dialectal and the standard variant depending on the communicative situation demonstrates a high level of linguistic competence rather than a deficiency thereof. Such code-switching reflects the flexibility of linguistic consciousness and confirms that dialectal variation fulfills not only a differentiating but also an integrating function, ensuring a balance between individual identity and collective belonging [15].

Conclusion

The study conducted allows us to conclude that dialectal variation is an integral and system-forming property of the modern English language, reflecting its social, territorial and cultural multidimensionality. The analysis of the scholarly literature indicates that variation should not be regarded as a deviation from the norm or as a sign of linguistic instability; on the contrary, it represents a natural manifestation of the internal dynamics of language and its capacity to adapt to changing communicative conditions. In the era of globalization and digitalization, dialectal differences are not disappearing but are acquiring new functions, serving as an instrument for the expression of identity and social belonging. The polycentric character of the English language, manifested in the existence of numerous national varieties with their own normative foundations, requires a revision of traditional notions of language norm and standard.

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Prospects for the further study of this subject area are associated with an in-depth theoretical analysis of the interaction between dialectal variation and language standardization, as well as with the development of comprehensive approaches that take into account the sociocultural conditionality of speakers' verbal behavior.

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