

Specific features of English dialects

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It is often considered difficult to decide whether two linguistic varieties are dialects of the same language or two separate but closely related languages; this is especially true of dialects of primitive societies.

Normally, dialects of the same language are considered to be mutually intelligible while different languages are not. Intelligibility between dialects is, however, almost never absolutely complete; on the other hand, speakers of closely related languages can still communicate to a certain extent when each uses his own mother tongue.

There is a term 'vernacular' among the synonyms for dialect; it refers to the common, everyday speech of the ordinary people of a region. The word accent has numerous meanings; in addition to denoting the pronunciation of a person or groups of people ("a foreign accent", "a British accent", and "a Southern accent"). In contrast to accent, the term dialect is used to refer not only to the sounds of language but also to its grammar and vocabulary. [1, 156]

A dialect may be characterized as relatively archaic, because it shows fewer innovations than the others; or it may be archaic in one feature only". [2, 95]

After the appearance of a dialectal feature, interaction between speakers who have adopted this feature and those who have not leads to the expansion of its area or even to its disappearance. In a single social milieu (generally the inhabitants of the same locality, generation and social class), the chance of the complete adoption or rejection of a new dialectal feature is very great; the intense contact and consciousness of membership within the social group fosters such uniformity. When several age groups or social strata live within the same locality and especially when people speaking the same language live in separate communities, dialectal differences are easily maintained.

Communication lines such as roads (if they are at least several centuries old), river valleys, or seacoasts often have a unifying influence. Also important urban centers often form the hub of a circular region in which the same dialect is spoken. In such areas the prestige dialect of the city has obviously expanded. As a general rule, those dialects, or at least certain dialectal features, with greater social prestige tend to replace those that are valued lower on the social scale. [3, 117]

The Cornish dialect (in Cornish: Kernewek or Kernowek) is one of the Brythonic group of Celtic languages. The language continued to function as a community language in parts of Cornwall until the late 18th century, and there have been attempts to revive the language since the early 20th century. The revival of Cornish began in 1904 when Henry Jenner, a Celtic language enthusiast, published his book *Handbook of the Cornish language*. His work was based on Cornish as it was spoken in the 18th century, although his pupil Robert Morton Nance later steered the revival more to

the style of the 16th century, before the language became influenced by English. This set the tone for the next few decades; as revival gained pace, learners of the language disagreed on which style of Cornish to use, and a number of competing orthographies were in use by the end of the century. Nevertheless, many Cornish language textbooks and works of literature have been published over the decades, and an increasing number of people are studying the language. Recent developments include Cornish music, independent films and children's books, a small number of children in Cornwall have been brought up to be bilingual native speakers, and the language is taught in many schools. Cornish gained official recognition under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2002, and in 2008 a Standard Written Form was agreed in an attempt to unify the orthographies and move the revival forward. In the 20th century a conscious effort was made to revive Cornish as a language for everyday use in speech and writing. The number of Cornish speakers is growing. Determining a figure for the number of Cornish speakers depends on how the ability to speak the language is defined.

The full characteristic of Gender in South-Western English we would like to base on the part of the article by Samuels M. Samuels uses the historical label "Wessex" to describe the countries of South – Western England.

It is usually claimed that English nouns lost their grammatical gender during the historical period called Middle English, roughly 1100-1500. But this claim needs some qualification. What actually happened during the Middle English period was that more overt gender marking of English nouns gave way to more covert marking. The term 'gender' is used here to refer to morph syntactic classes of nouns. It is true that the loss of adjective concord in Middle English made gender marking less overt; but Modern English still retains some determiner concord which allows us to classify nouns (Christophersen and Sandved 1969). In addition, Modern English (ModE), like Old English (OE) and Middle English (ME), possesses pronominal distinctions which enable us to classify nouns. [4, 154]

We can distinguish at least three distinct types of gender marking along the continuum from most overt to most covert. The most overt involves the marking of gender in the morphology of the noun itself, as in Swahili. Near the middle of the overt-covert continuum we could place the marking of gender in adnominals such as adjectives and determiners. At or near the covert end of the scale we find the marking of gender in pronominal system.

One of the most important aspects of studying south-western English is dialect syntax. Brushing aside of dialect syntax is regrettable because the study of grammatical variation can shed light on the workings

of any language, and thereby enrich general linguistics. The present paragraph deals with an area of dialect syntax – transitivity in the South – West of England dialects and attempts to characterize and explain, synchronically and diachronically its salient features.

We prefer the moderation of Scott S., who simply admits that the notion of direct object (DO) ‘is not at all transparent in its usage’. The problem, therefore, should be not so much to discard but rather to improve our notions of transitivity and intransitivity. In this regard, the dialects of South-West England are important and interesting. [5, 84]

When compared with the corresponding standard language, any geographical variety can be characterized by three possibilities: a) identity; b) archaism (due to slower evolution); c) innovation. Interestingly enough, it is not uncommon in syntax for (b) and (c) to combine if a given dialect draws extensively on a secondary aspect of an older usage. This is true of those features which are highly characteristic of the South-West Standard English.

In considering the history and development of the English language we may maintain that a regional variety of English is a complex of regional standard norms and dialects. We must admit, however that rural dialects, in the conservative sense of the word, are almost certainly dying out (e.g. the Cornish language); increasing geographical mobility, centralization and urbanization are undoubtedly factors in this decline. Owing to specific ways of development, every regional variety is characterized by a set of features identical to a variety of English.

Dialects survive for the most part in rural districts and England is a highly urbanized country and has very few areas that are remote or difficult to access. Much of the regional variation in pronunciation currently to be found in the country is gradually being lost. On the other hand, it is important to note that urban dialects are undergoing developments of a new type, and the phonetic differences between urban varieties seem to be on the increase.

The United Kingdom is particular about accents, in the scene that here attitudes and prejudices many people hold towards non-standard pronunciations are still very strong.

Therefore RP has always been and still is the “prestigious” national standard pronunciations, the so-called implicitly accepted social standard. In spite of the fact that RP speakers form a very small percentage of the British population, it has the highest status of British English pronunciation and is genuinely regionless.

In the UK RP is a unique national standard. About seventy years ago along with regional types of rural dialects co-existed side by side in the country. There is a great difference between Standard English and dialect speech. Thus, two people from different counties of the same country cannot understand each other in spite of the fact that their native language is English. Some words and constructions of sentences are incomprehensible. The way individuals pronounce certain words is often a good clue to their background. Language by its very nature is dynamic and constantly evolving new words and expressions are almost daily being absorbed and some older words are falling into disuse.

References:

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