Variants of the English Language

Lecture 15

1. The Main Variants of the English Language

- Every language allows different kinds of variations:

1. geographical;
2. territorial;
3. stylistic and others.

- For historical and economic reasons the English language has spread over vast territories. It is the national language of:

1. England proper,
2. the USA,
3. Australia,
4. New Zealand,
5. some provinces of Canada.

- It is the official language in:

1. Wales,
2. Scotland,
3. in Gibraltar,
4. on the island of Malta.

Standard English

- may be defined as that form of English which is current and literary, substantially uniform and recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken or understood. Standard English is the variety most widely accepted and understood either within an English-speaking country or throughout the entire English-speaking world.

Variants of English

- are regional variants possessing a literary norm. There are distinguished variants existing on the territory of the United Kingdom:

1. British English,
2. Scottish English,
3. Irish English,

- Variants existing outside the British Isles:

1. American English,
2. Canadian English,
3. New Zealand English,
4. South African English,
5. Indian English.

- British English is referred to the written Standard English and the pronunciation known as Received Pronunciation (RP).

2. Variants of English in the United Kingdom

Scottish English has a long tradition as a separate written and spoken variety. Pronunciation, grammar and lexis differ from other varieties of English existing on the territory of the British Isles. It can be explained by its historical development.

- The identity of Scottish English reflects an institutionalized social structure, as it is most noticeable in the realm of law, local government, religion, and education.

Lexical peculiarities of Scottish English

1. Some semantic fields are structured differently in Scottish English and in British English, e.g. the term *minor* in British English is used to denote a person below the age of 18 years, while Scottish law distinguishes between *pupils* (to age 12 for girls and 14 for boys) and *minors* (older children up to 18);

2. Some words used in Scottish English have equivalents in British English, e.g. (ScE) *extortion* – (BrE) *blackmail*;

3. The distinctiveness of Scottish English derived from the influence of other languages, especially Gaelic, Norwegian, and French., e.g., Gaelic borrowings include:

- *cairn* – 'a pile of stones that marks the top of a mountain or some other special place';
- *sporran* – 'a small furry bag that hangs in front of a man's kilt as part of traditional Scottish dress'

4. Many words which have the same form, but different meanings in Scottish English and British English, e.g. the word *gate* in Scottish English means ‘road’;
5. Some Scottish words and expressions are used and understood across virtually the whole country, e.g.

- *dinnae* (don’t),
- *wee* (‘small’),
- *kirk* (‘church’),
- *lassie* (‘girl’).

Irish English

- subsumes all the Englishes of the Ireland. The two main politico-linguistic divisions are *Southern* and *Northern*, within and across which further varieties are *Anglo-Irish, Hiberno-English* [haɪˈbɜːnəu-], *Ulster Scots*, and the usage of the two capitals, *Dublin* and *Belfast*.

The Irish English vocabulary is characterized by:

1. the presence of words with the same form as in British English but different meanings in Irish English, e.g.

- *backward* – ‘shy’;
- *to doubt* – ‘to believe strongly’;
- *bold* – ‘naughty’;

2. the use of most regionally marked words by older, often rural people, e.g.

- *biddable* ‘obedient’; покорный
- *feasant* – ‘affable’; приветливый
- the presence of nouns taken from Irish which often relate either to food or the supernatural, e.g. *banshee* – ‘fairy woman’ from *bean sidhe*;

4. the Gaelic influence on meanings of some words, e.g. *to destroy* and *drenched*. These words have the semantic ranges of their Gaelic equivalents *mill* 'to injure, spoil' and *báite* 'drenched, drowned, very wet';
5. the presence of words typical only of Irish English (the so-called Irishisms), e.g. *begorrah* – 'by God';

6. the layer of words shared with Scottish English, e.g.:

- *ava* – ‘at all’;
- *greet* – ‘cry, weep’;
- *brae* – ‘hill, steep slope’.
- Besides distinctive features in lexis Irish English has grammatical, phonetical and spelling peculiarities of its own, e.g.:
- the use of ‘does be/ do be’ construction in the following phrase: ‘They *do be talking* on their mobiles a lot’;
- the plural form of *you* is distinguished from the singular, normally by using the otherwise archaic English word *ye* to denote plurality, e.g. ‘*Did ye all go to see it*?’

Variants of English outside the British Isles:

1. American English,
2. Canadian English,
3. Australian English,
4. New Zealand English,
5. South African English,
6. Indian English, etc.

American English

is the variety of the English language spoken in the USA. The first wave of English-speaking immigrants was settled in North America in the 17th century. There were also people who spoke Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Swedish, and Finnish languages.

Whole groups of words which belong to American vocabulary exclusively and constitute its specific features are called Americanisms.

a) Historical Americanisms:

- *fall* – ‘autumn’;
- *to guess* – ‘to think’;
- *sick* – ‘ill, unwell’.

In American usage these words still retain their old meanings whereas in British English their meanings have changed or fell out of use.

b) Proper Americanisms

- were not discovered in British vocabulary: *redbud* багряник– ‘an American tree having small budlike pink flowers’;
- *blue-grass* – ‘a sort of grass peculiar to North America’.

c) Specifically American borrowings

reflect the historical contacts of the Americans with other nations on the American continent:

- *ranch, sombrero* (Spanish borrowings),
- *Toboggan*, caribou канадский олень (Indian borrowings).

d) American shortenings:

- *dorm* – dormitory;
- *mo* – moment;
- *cert* – certainly.

Canadian English

is the variety of the English language used in Canada and close to American English. Specifically Canadian words are called Canadianisms, e.g.:

- *parkade* – ‘parking garage’;
- *chesterfield* – ‘a sofa, couch’;
- *to fathom out* – ‘to explain’,
- *to table a document* – ‘to present it’, whereas in American English it means ‘to withdraw it from consideration’.

Australian English

is similar to British English, but also borrows from American English, e.g. *truck* is used instead of *lorry*. The exposure to the different spellings of British and American English leads to a certain amount of spelling confusion, e.g. *behaviour* as opposed to *behavior*.

Uniquely Australian terms:

- *outback* – remote regional areas;
- *walkabout* – a long journey of certain length;
- *bush* – native forested areas.

Australian English has a unique set of diminutives formed by adding ***–o*** or ***–ie*** to the ends of words:

- *arvo* (afternoon),
- *servo* (service station),
- *barbie* (barbecue),
- *bikkie* (biscuit).

A very common feature of traditional Australian English is rhyming slang based on Cockney rhyming slang and imported by migrants from London in the 19th century, e.g.:

- *Captain Cook* rhymes with *look*, so *to have a captain cook*, or *to have a captain*, means *to have a look.*

New Zealand English

is the variety of the English language spoken in New Zealand and close to Australian English in pronunciation.

The only deference between New Zealand and British spelling is in the ending ***–ise*** or ***–ize*****.**

New Zealanders use the ***–ise*** ending exclusively, whereas Britons use either ending, and some British dictionaries prefer the ***–ize*** ending.

Many local words in New Zealand English were borrowed from the ‘Maori population to describe the local flora, fauna, and the natural environment, e.g.

- the names of birds (*kiwi, tui*);
- the names of fish (*shellfish,, hoki*);
- the names of native trees (*kauri, rimu*) and many others.

Words that are unique to New Zealand English or shared with Australian English, e.g.

- *bach* – ‘a small holiday home, often with only one or two rooms and of simple construction’;
- *footpath* – ‘pavement’;
- *togs* – ‘swimming costume’.

New Zealand idioms

It is in idioms, in different metaphoric phrases that New Zealand English has made most progress or divergence. Often they reflect significant differences in culture., e.g.:

- *up the Puhoi without a paddle* –'to be in difficulties without an obvious solution';
- *sticky beak* – 'someone unduly curious about people's affairs'.
- The latter idiom in Australia is quite pejorative whereas in New Zealand it is used with more affection and usually as a tease.

South African English

is the variety of the English language used in South Africa and surrounding counties (Namibia, Zimbabwe). It is a mother tongue only for 40 % of the white inhabitants and a tiny minority of black inhabitants of the region. South African English bears some resemblance in pronunciation to a mix of Australian and British English.

In South African English there are words that do not exist in British and American English, usually derived from African languages, e.g.

- *bra, bru* – ‘male friend’,
- *dorp* – ‘a small rural town or village’,
- *sat* – ‘dead, passed away’.

In South African English:

- *boy* – ‘a black man’ (derogative),
- *township* – ‘urban area for black, coloured or Indian South Africans under apartheid’, расовая изоляция
- *book of life* – ‘national identity document’.

Indian English

is the variety of the English language spoken in India. The language that Indians are taught in schools is essentially British English and in particular, spellings follow British conventions. Many phrases that the British may consider antique are still popular in India.

Official letters include phrases like

- *please do the needful,*
- *you will be intimated shortly,*
- *your obedient servant.*

Indian English mixes in various words from Indian languages, e.g. *bandh* or *hartal* for strikes, *challen* for a monetary receipt or a traffic ticket.

Despite the fact that British English is an official language of Government in India, there are words used only in Indian English are:

- *crore* – ‘ten millions’;
- *scheduled tribe* – ‘a socially/economically backward Indian tribe, given special privileges by the government’,
- *mohalla* – ‘an area of a town or village, a community’.

Phonetic peculiarities of Indian English,

- rhotic [r] is pronounced in all positions;
- the distinction between [v] and [w] is generally neutralized to [w];
- in such words as *old* and *low* the vowel is generally [ɔ], etc.

A variety in syntax:

- *one* used rather than the indefinite article: *He gave me one book, yes;*
- *no* as question tags: *He is coming, yes*?
- Present Perfect rather than Past Simple:

I have bought the book yesterday, etc.

Some Peculiarities of British English and American English

- The American variant of the English language differs from British English in pronunciation, some minor features of grammar, spelling standards and vocabulary.
- The American **spelling** is in some respects simpler than its British counterpart, in other respects just different.

Words written with	British English	American English
-our/-or	col***ou***r, hon***ou***r	col***o***r, hon***o***r
-ou-/-o-	fav***ou***rite	fav***o***rite
-re/-er	centr***e***, theatr***e***	cent***er***, theat***er***
-gue/-g	catalog***ue***, dialog***ue***	catalog, dialog
-ise/-ize -yse/-yze	real***ise***, harmon***ise***, anal***ise***	real***ize***, harmon***ize*** anal***yze***
-xion/-ction	conne***xion***, refle***xion***	conne***ction***, refle***ction***
-ll-/-l-	counse***ll***or, mode***ll***ing	counse***l***or, mode***l***ing
-ae-/-e-	encyclop***ae***dia an***ae***mia	encyclop***e***dia an***e***mia

Lexical differences:

1. Cases where different words are used for the same denotatum:

- *sweets* (Br) – *candy* (Am);
- *reception clerk* (Br) – *desk clerk* (Am);

2. Cases where some words are used in both variants but are much commoner in one of them: *shop* (br) – *store* (am);

3. Cases where one (or more) lexico-semantic variant(s) is (are) specific to either British or American English. Both variants of English have the word *faculty*. But only in Am. E. it denotes ‘all the teachers and other professional workers of a university or college’. In Br.E. it means ‘teaching staff’.
4. Cases where the same words have different semantic structure in Br. And Am. E.: *homely* in Br.E. means ‘home-loving’ in Am.E. “unattractive in appearance’.

5. Cases where there are no equivalent words in one of the variants, e.g. *drive-in* in Am.E. denotes ‘a cinema or restaurant that one can visit without leaving one’s car’.
6. Cases where the connotational aspect of meaning comes to the fore. The word *politician* in Br.E. means ‘a person who is professionally involved in politics’, whereas in Am.E. the word is derogatory as it means ‘a person who acts in a manipulative way, typically to gain advancement within an organization’.

3) Derivational and morphological peculiarities:

Such affixes as *–ee, -ster, -super* are more frequent in Am.E.:

- *draftee* – ‘a young man about to be enlisted”,
- *roadster* – ‘motor-car for long journeys by road’,
- *super-market* – ‘a very large shop that sells food and other products for the home’.

- Am.E. sometimes favours words that are morphologically more complex: *transportation – transport* (br). In some cases the formation of words by means of affixes is more preferable in Am.E. while the in Br.E. the form is back-formation: *burglarize* (Am) – *burgle* (from *burglar*) (Br).

Social Variation of the English Language

- Social language variation deals with different identities a person acquires participating in social structure. Social language variation provides an answer to the question ‘Who are you?’
- People belong to different social groups and perform different social roles. A person might be identified as ‘a woman’, ‘ parent,’ ‘a doctor’, ‘a political activist’, etc. Any of these identities can have consequences for the kind of language people use.

- The language is the chief signal of both permanent and transparent aspects of a person's social identity.
- Certain aspects of social variation seem to be particular linguistic consequence. Age, sex, and socioeconomic class have been repeatedly shown to be of importance when it comes to explaining the way sounds, grammatical constructions, and vocabulary vary.
- Adopting a social role invariably involves a choice of appropriate linguistic forms.

Gender Issues

Sexism – discrimination against one sex, typically men against women. There is now a widespread awareness of the way in which language displays social attitudes towards men and women. The criticism have been mainly directed at the bases built into English vocabulary and grammar which reflect a traditionally male-oriented view of the world that reinforces the low status of women in society. Thus, gender issues have become part of the problem of **political correctness**.

In vocabulary, attention has been focused on the replacement of ‘male’ words with a generic meaning by neutral items, e.g.:

- *chairman* becomes *chair* or *chairperson*,
- *salesman – sales assistant*.

In certain cases, such as job descriptions, the use of sexually neutral language has become a legal requirement.

The vocabulary of marital status has also been affected – notably in the introduction of *Ms* as a neutral alternative to *Miss* or *Mrs*.

Gender issues have gained a serious scientific ground and development in Britain, the USA and in European countries.

The problem connected with the interaction of language and gender – defined as a sociocultural category – is concerned with answers to the following questions:

- Why do gender ideologies appear?
- Why are particular gender notions practiced through language?
- How are gender ideologies constituted / constructed in language?, and
- In what way do they shape discourse communities?

Critical discourse analysis

Is the approaches to the investigation of gender in modern linguistics.

It examines:

- the interaction between language and social structures,
- how social structures are constituted by linguistic interaction.

It aims:

- to provide accounts of the production, internal structure, and overall organization of texts,
- to investigate the sociopolitical and cultural presuppositions and implications of discourse.

Cultural practice theory

The second approach centers its attention on:

- the constitution of cultural meanings,
- the significance of individual experience as a force in this process.

The approach examines members' everyday lived experiences as a whole to demonstrate how they constitute gender ideologies.

It reveals:

- the categories 'men' and 'women' by examining what people do to shape these cultural categories,
- how individuals form cultural meanings and use them on the basis of their own gender practices and everyday activities.

Lingua Genderrology

is an independent branch in linguistic science that has given rise to a number of scientifically well-grounded works in such fields of the English language as phonetics, grammar, lexis, phraseology.

- In Russia among the most significant investigations based on the material of different languages, works are carried out by the members of the laboratory of Gender Studies of Moscow State Linguistic University.

Occupational varieties

The term occupational dialect is associated with a particular way of earning a living.

All occupations are linguistically distinctive to some degree. The more specialized the occupation, and the more senior or professional the post, the more technical the language is likely to be.

Occupational varieties of the English language:

- Religious English,
- Legal English,
- News Media English,
- Advertising English.

They provide the clearest cases of differences and peculiarities in phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and patterns of discourse.

Religious English

is a variety in which all aspects of structure are implicated:

- ***Phonological identity*** is in such genres as spoken prayers, sermons проповедь, chants песнопение, including the unusual case of unison speech.
- ***Graphological identity*** is found in liturgical leaflets, biblical texts, and many other religious publications.
- ***Grammatical identity -*** in invocations, prayers, blessings, and other ritual forms, both public and private.
- ***Lexical identity*** pervades formal articles of faith and scriptural texts, with the lexicon of doctrine informing the whole of religious expression.
- ***Distinctive discourse identity -*** in such domains as liturgical services, preaching, and rites of passage (e.g. wedding, funerals).

Legal English

Is in common with Religious English as it shares with religion a respect for ritual land tradition. When English eventually became the official language of the law in Britain (17th century), a vast amount of earlier vocabulary had already become fixed in legal usage.

- The reliance on Latin phrasing: ***mens rea вина***
- French borrowings: ***lien*** – was supplemented by ceremonial phrasing (*signed, sealed,* and *delivered*), conventional terminology (*alibi, negotiate instrument*), and other features which have been handed down to form present-day legal language.

Legal English has several subvarieties

- the language of legal documents, such as contracts, deeds, insurance policies, wills;
- the language of works of legal reference, with their complex apparatus of footnotes and indexing;
- the language of case law, made up of the spoken or written decisions which judges make about individual cases.

News Media English

is a variety that includes newspaper language, radio language, and television language.

News reports are characterized by the use of:

- the so-called ‘preferred’ forms of expressions,
- lack of stylistic idiosyncrasy,
- their consistence of style over long periods of time.

Distinctive features of news reporting:

1. The headline is critical, summarizing and drawing attention to the story (telegraphic style);
2. The first ('lead') paragraph both summarizes and begins to tell the story (the usual source of the headline);
3. The original source of the story is given, either in byline or built into the text (*A senior White House official said*…);
4. The participants are categorized, their names usually being preceded by a general term (*champ, prisoner, official*) and adjectives (*handsome French singer Jean Bruni*…);
5. Explicit time and place locators are given (*In Paris yesterday*…), facts and figures (*68 people were killed in a bomb blast*…), and direct or indirect quotations (*Pm 'bungles', says expert; Expert says PM bungled*).

Advertising English

can be observed in commercial advertising. It uses:

- deviant graphology (*Beanz Meanz Heinz*),
- strong sound effects, such as rhythm, alliteration, and rhyme.

Commercial advertising provides fertile soil for adjective inflections, e.g. *The result: smoother, firmer skin; The tastiest fish; The latest in gas cooking*.

Advertisements rely a great deal on imperative sentences (*Learn a language on location, stay with a welcoming local family, make friends with other visitors from around the world*).

Lexically, this variety of English tends to use words which are:

- vivid (*new, bright*),
- concrete (*soft, washable*),
- positive (*safe, extra*),
- unreserved (*best, perfect*).

Advertising English is characterized by the use of:

- highly figurative expressions, e.g. *taste the sunshine in K-Y peaches* (canned fresh).
- word-play and is characterized by a wide use of slogans, e.g. *Electrolux brings luxury to life; Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach*.

- English is now the dominant or official language in over 60 countries, and is represented in every continent. In four continents, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, and in the vast ocean basin of the Pacific, it is an official language in thirty-four countries. The two leading normative models in fostering standard of educated usage are British and American English. Currently, English is the de facto international language of the Third World. In 21st century English has become the international language of communication, both conventional and digital.

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