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SOME PECULIARITIES OF SOUTH-WESTERN REGIONAL PRONUNCIATION

Целью статьи является исследование региональной вариативности на юго-западе Англии, а также характеристика языковой ситуации на Британских островах в целом. В ходе исследования автор выяснила правомерность целостного подхода к диалектам юго-западного ареала как к системе общерегионального единства, имеющего глубокие исторические корни. Важной тенденцией языкового развития на юго-западе Англии является сглаживание узколокальных и сохранение региональных черт.

Ключевые слова: *диалект, вариативность, языковая ситуация, юго-восток, вокализация, консонантизм.*

Метою статті є дослідження регіональної варіативності на південному заході Англії, а також характеристика мовної ситуації на Британських островах в цілому. У ході дослідження автор з'ясувала правомірність цілісного підходу до діалектів південно-західного ареалу як до системи загальнорегіональної єдності, яке має глибокі історичні корені. Важливою тенденцією мовленнєвого розвитку на південному заході Англії є згладжування вузьколокальних та збереження регіональних рис.

Ключові слова: *діалект, варіативність, мовна ситуація, південний схід, вокалізація, консонантизм.*

The aim of this article is to reveal the problem of regional variation of English in the south-west of Great Britain and to characterize the language situation in Great Britain on the whole. In the course of investigation the author draws conclusion that the dialects of the South-west should be studied as a system with deep historical roots. The main tendency of the language development in the South-west is removing local features and preserving regional ones which come back to the 10th century. The formation of the South-western regional variant on the basis of local territorial dialects is the main characteristic of the language situation in the South-west of England.

Key words: *dialect, variation, language situation, south-west, vocalization, consonantism.*

The aim of this article is to reveal the problem of regional variation of English in the south-west of Great Britain and to characterize the language situation in Great Britain on the whole.

According to some data, there are about 300 local regional dialects. The local dialects of England are generally classified into five groups: Northern, Midland, Eastern, Western and Southern. Scottish English and Irish English likewise have their own dialects [3]. The terms "dialect" and "accent" need some comment. P. Trudgill uses "dialect" to refer to varieties distinguished from each other by differences of grammar and vocabulary. "Accent", on the other hand, refers to varieties of pronunciation [1:3].

The variety of British English that is traditionally called Standard English (in reference to lexical and grammatical usages, its pronunciation being now known as "Received Pronunciation" or RP) is a direct descendant of the East Midland dialect. "Received" was understood in its nineteenth-century sense as "accepted in the best society". RP became a significant marker of social class in all parts of Britain, being opposed practically everywhere to the local accents of lower-class people. People who aspired to jobs and promotion in government offices, the Army, the universities, the Church, etc. tried to get rid of their non-standard accents. While British society has changed much since that time, however, RP has remained the accent of those in the upper reaches of the social scale, as measured by education, income and profession, or title. It is essentially the accent of those educated at public schools. It is largely through these schools that the accent is perpetuated. RP is not the accent of any region (except historically: its origins were in the speech of London and the surrounding area). It is quite impossible to tell from pronunciation alone where an RP speaker comes from [4]. But only a small percentage (3 %) of the population of England speaks RP. The others have some of regional accent. Speakers of RP are at the top of the social scale, and their speech gives no clue to their regional origin. People at the bottom of the social scale speak with the most obvious, the "broadest" regional accents. Between these two extremes, in general (and there are always individual exceptions) the higher people are on the social scale, the less regionally marked will be their accents, and the less they will differ from RP [6]. This relationship between class and accent can be represented as hierarchy in which RP, regional standards and dialects are situated from top to bottom.

So, the most prestigious British dialect is Standard English; the most prestigious accent is RP. It is with these that learners are most familiar. Standard English is the dialect used by educated people throughout the Brit-

ish Isles. Nevertheless, most people in Britain (including many who would generally be regarded as speakers of Standard English) have at least some regional dialect forms in their speech. Usage of RP has social significance. In general, the higher people are on the social scale, the fewer of regional forms their speech will exhibit. The lower a person is on the social scale, the more obvious his (her) regional accent will tend to be. On the whole, the language situation in Great Britain is characterized by diglossia which determines the functional differentiation of different types of British English pronunciation.

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. Thus, the criterion of intelligibility is quite relative. In more developed societies, the distinction between dialects and related languages is easier to make because of the existence of standard languages and, in some cases, national consciousness.

There is the 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 a group of people ("a foreign accent", "a British accent", "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 [2].

The basic cause of dialectal differentiation is linguistic change [5]. Every living language constantly changes in its various elements. Because languages are extremely complex systems of signs, it is almost inconceivable that linguistic evolution could affect the same elements and even transform them in the same way in all regions where one language is spoken and for all speakers in the same region. At first glance, differences caused by linguistic change seem to be slight, but they inevitably accumulate with time (e.g. compare Chaucer's English with modern English). Related languages usually begin as dialects of the same language.

When a change (an innovation) appears among only one section of the speakers of a language, this automatically creates a dialectal difference. Sometimes an innovation in dialect A contrasts with the unchanged usage

(archaism) in dialect B. Sometimes a separate innovation occurs in each of the two dialects. Of course, different innovations will appear in different dialects, so that, in comparison with its contemporaries, no one dialect as a whole can be considered archaic in any absolute sense. 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 [6:415].

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.

The element of mutual contact plays a large role in the maintenance of speech patterns; that is why differences between geographically distant dialects are normally greater than those between dialects of neighbouring settlements. This also explains why bundles of isoglosses so often form along major natural barriers — impassable mountain ranges, deserts, uninhabited marshes or forests, or wide rivers — or along political borders. Similarly, racial or religious differences contribute to linguistic differentiation because contact between members of one faith or race and those of another within the same area is very often much more superficial and less frequent than contact between members of the same racial or religious group. An especially powerful influence is the relatively infrequent occurrence of intermarriages, thus preventing dialectal mixture at the point where it is most effective; namely, in the mother tongue learned by the child at home [6:417].

The southwestern areas of England include Devonshire, Somersetshire, Cornwall, Wiltshire and Dosertshire. Let's consider the **Cornish** language. The Cornish are a Celtic people, in ancient times the Westernmost kingdom of the Dumnonii, the people who inhabited Cornwall, Devon and West Somerset. The Cornish are probably the same people who have lived in Cornwall since the introduction of farming around 3000 B. C. The start of farming in Cornwall may also indicate the start of what some scholars now term 'proto Indo-European', from whence the Celtic languages along with the Italic and other related groups of languages began evolving. Between 1500 B. C. and the first encounters with the Romans (around 350 B. C.), the Celtic languages are believed to split into two distinct groups, the 'p'

and 'q' Celtic branches. Cornish, Welsh and Breton (to which Cornish is most closely related) are the three remaining 'p' Celtic languages. Irish, Scots Gaelic and Manx are the 'q' Celtic tongues. Cornish developed pretty much naturally into a modern European language until the 17th century, after which it came under pressure by the encroachment of English. Factors involved in its decline included the introduction of the English prayer book, the rapid introduction of English as a language of commerce and most particularly the negative stigma associated with what was considered by Cornish people themselves as the language of the poor [3].

Cornish died out as a native language in the late 19th century, with the last Cornish speaker believed to have lived in Penwith. At that time however, Cornish was being revived by Henry Jenner, planting the seeds for the current state of the language. Standard Cornish was developed from Jenner's work by a team under the leadership of Morton Nance, culminating in the first full set of grammars, dictionaries and periodicals. Standard Cornish (Unified) is again being developed through UCR (Unified Cornish Revised), and incorporates most features of Cornish, including allowing for Eastern and Western forms of pronunciation and colloquial and literary forms of Cornish.

Today Cornish typically appeals to all age groups and to those either who have an empathy with Cornwall, who have Cornish roots or perhaps have moved to Cornwall from elsewhere. One of the great successes of Cornish today is its wide appeal. After a break in native speakers for nearly one hundred years, Cornwall has nowadays many children for whom Cornish is a native language alongside with English, and many people who are fluent in the language [5].

Cornish is the only modern Celtic language that receives no significant support from government, despite the growing number of people learning Cornish, and the immense good will towards it from ordinary Cornish people and from elsewhere. This contrasts strongly with the favourable stand taken by the Manx government towards Manx for example, as evidenced by Manx primary school places being made generally available. Recently, the UK government scrapped the Cornish GCSE. Lack of Cornish language facilities and support is no longer just a language issue, but is rapidly becoming a civil rights and political issue too. Despite the growing support of councillors in Cornwall, some key individuals in County Hall continue to make clear their hostility to the language.

Let us discuss some other peculiarities of South-western dialects. One of the main features is **vocalization** in such cases as: 1) **"a" after "w"**. In

Devonshire it is realized as [a:]: wasp [wa:sp], watch [wa:tʃ], want [wa:nt], wander [wa:nd]; in Somersetshire — as [æ]: warm [wærm], warn [wærn], wart [wært]; 2) **"asp", "ass", "ast", "a"** are pronounced as **[æ]** both in Devonshire, Somersetshire and Wiltshire: grass [græs], glass [glæs], fast [fæst]; 3) **"al + a consonant"** in Somersetshire "l" is realized as [a:]: talk [ta:k], walk [wa:k], chalk [tʃa:k], balk [ba:k]; 4) **a + l, a + ll:** in Devonshire and Wiltshire "a" transforms into [æ] in the open syllable: crane [kræn], frame [fræm], lame [læm], make [mæk], name [næm]; 5) when the **first sound is vowel** both in Devonshire, Somersetshire and Wiltshire: acre [jakr], ale [jal], acorn ['jak∂rn], hare [hja:r], ache [jek], behave [bɪ'hjev]; 6) **"e"** transforms into **"a" in the closed syllables** in Western dialects: egg [ag], fetch [fatʃ], step [stap], wretch [ratʃ], stretch [stratʃ]; 7) **"e"** transforms into **[e:] in the closed syllables** in South-Western and Western dialects: leg [le:g], bed [be:d], hedge [he:dʒ]; 8) **if "e" follows "w"** it transforms into **[ɜ:]** in the west: well [wɜ:l], twelve [twɜ:lv], wench [wɜ:ntʃ]; 9) **"i"** transforms into **[∂] in the closed syllable** in Western dialects: bill [b∂l], little ['l∂tl], children ['tʃ∂ldr∂n], cliff [kl∂f], hill [h∂l], drift [dr∂ft], shrimp [ʃr∂mp], fit [f∂t], ship [ʃ∂p], pig [p∂g], fish [f∂ʃ]; 10) **"ight"** transforms into **[e]** in Western dialects: flight, right; 11) **if a nasal consonant follows "i"** it transforms into **[e]** in Western dialects: sing [seŋ], cling [kleŋ]; 12) **"i" before "nd"** transforms into **[e]**: bind [ben], blind [blen], find [ven], grind [gren]; 13) **"i" in the open syllable** transforms into **[eɪ]** in South-Western dialects: fly [fleɪ], lie [leɪ], thigh [θeɪ]; 14) **"o" in the closed syllable followed by a consonant** transforms into **[a:]** in South-western and Western dialects: dog [da:g], cross [kra:s]; 15) **"o" + a nasal consonant** transforms into **[æ]** in Western dialects: among [∂'mæŋ], long [læŋ], wrong [ræŋ]; 16) **"ol" + a consonant** transforms into **[u∂]** in Western dialects: gold [gv∂ld], old [u∂ld]; 17) **"oi"** transforms into **[aɪ]** in South-western dialects: choice [tʃaɪs], join [dʒaɪn], moil [maɪl]; 18) **"u" in the closed syllable** transforms into [e] in Southern dialects: but [bet], dust [dest]; 19) **"oo"** transforms into **[ö]** in Western dialects: book [bök], cook [kök], crook [krök], look [lök], took [tök], good [göd], foot [föt], stood [stöd]; 20) **"i" in the open syllable** transforms into **[eɪ]** in South-western and Southern dialects: fly [fleɪ], lie [leɪ], thigh [θeɪ], bide [beɪd], wide [weɪd], time [teɪm]; 21) **"o" in the closed syllable followed by a consonant** transforms into **[a:]** in South-western dialect: dog [da:g], cross [kra:s]; 22) **"o" + a nasal consonant** transforms into **[æ]** both in Devonshire, Somersetshire and Wiltshire: among [∂'mæŋ], long [læŋ], wrong [wræŋ]; 23) **"ol" + a consonant** transforms into **[u∂l]** in Western dialects: gold [gu∂ld], old [u∂ld]; 24) **"u" in the closed syllable** transforms into **[e]** in Southern dialects: but [bet],

dust [dest]; 25) **"oo"** transforms into **[ö]** in Western dialects: book [bök], cook [kök], crook [krök], look [lök], took [tök], good [göd], foot [föt], stood [stöd]; 26) **"or"** transforms into **[a:]** in Western dialects: fork [fa:k], horse [ha:s], horn [ha:n], short [ʃa:t].

Another feature is **consonantism:** 1) **[w] in the beginning of the word or before "h"** is not pronounced: week [ouk], swick [su:k]; 2) **"w" before "r"** in Western dialects transforms into **[vr]**: wreck, wren, wrench, wrap, write, wrong e.g. Ye vratch, ye've vrutten that a'vrang (= You wretch, you've written that all wrong); 3) **"wh"** at the beginning of a word is **[w], [u:], [u∂]**; 4) in the middle of a word **[w]** is pronounced: boy [bwo], moist [mwɔɪst], toad [twud], cool [kwul], country ['kwɪntrɪ]; 5) **"f", "th", "s", "sh" are voiced:** Friday ['vræ:dɪ], friends [vrɪnʒ], fleas [vle:z], and in the these words: foe, father, fair, fear, find, fish, foal, full, follow, filth, fist, fire, fond, fault, feast, force, forge, fool; [θ]: thought [ðɔ:t], thick [ðɪk], thigh [ðaɪ], and in the words: from, freeze, fresh, free, friend, frost, frog, froth, flesh, fly flock, flood, fleece, fling, flower, fail; 6) **"t"** at the beginning of the word before a vowel; 7) **"t"** in the middle of the word is voiced: bottle ['bɔdl], kettle ['kedl], little ['lɪdl], nettle ['nedl], bottom ['bɔdm], matter ['med∂], cattle ['kɑdl], kittens [kɪdnz]; 8) the consonant **[t]** in (the French borrowings) **hasn't become [tʃ]** as it is in RP: picture ['pɪkt∂r], nature ['net∂r], feature ['fɪ∂t∂r]; 9) the middle **[t]** sometimes disappears in the positions before "m...l", "n...l", "m...r": brimstone ['brɪmsn], empty ['empɪ]; the same happens to the **middle [b]**: chamber > chimmer, embers > emmers, brambles > brimmels; 10) between **"l"** and **"r"**; **"r"** and **"l"**; **"n"** and **"r"** a **parasitic [d]** has developed: parlour ['pa:ld∂r], tailor ['taɪld∂r], smaller ['smɔ:ld∂r], curls ['ka:dlz], hurl ['a:dl], marl ['ma:dl], quarrel ['kwɔ:dl], world ['wa:dl], corner ['ka:nd∂r]; 11) **a parasitic [d]** appeared after **[l, n, r]**: feel [fi:ld], school [sku:ld], idle [aɪdld], mile [maɪdl], born [ba∂nd], soul [sɔ:ld], soon [zu:nd] gown [gaund], swoon [zaund], wine [waɪnd], miller ['mɪl∂d], scholar ['skɔl∂d]; 12) **the middle [d]** in the word "needle" comes after **[l]**: [ni:ld]; 13) the first **[θ]** is pronounced as **[p]**: thank [ðæŋk] and in other words: thatch, thaw, thigh, thin, thing, think, third, thistle, thong, thought, thousand, thumb, thunder, Thursday; sometimes **[θ]** is pronounced as **[t]** at the end of the word: lath [lat]; 14) in some words **[s]** at the beginning of the word is pronounced as **[ʃ]**: suet [ʃuɪt]; the same happens when [s] is in the middle of the word: first [ferʃt], breast [brɪʃt], next [nɪʃt];15) **"sh", "sk"** at the end of the word transforms into **[s]**: cask [kɑs], flask [flɑs], leash [li:s],tusk [tus]; sometimes instead of **[k] [tʃ]** is heard: back [bɑtʃ], wark [wa:tʃ]; 16) sometimes the **initial letter or a syllable is absent**: believe, deliver, desire, directly,

disturb, eleven, enough, except, occasion, inquest, epidemic; 17) **the initial "cl"** transforms into **[tl]**: clad [tlad], clap, clay, claw, clean, cleave, clergy, clerk, clew, cliff, climb, cling, clip, cloak, close, clot, cloth, cloud, clout; 18) **"gl"** in the beginning of the word transforms into **[dl]**: glad, glass, glisten, gloom, glove, glow; 18) **[l]** in the middle of the word isn't pronounced: shoulder ['ʃa:d∂r].

So, in the course of our research, we arrived at some conclusions. A regional variety of English is a complex of regional standard norms and dialects. 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. In the United Kingdom RP is a unique national standard.

About seventy or so years ago along with regional types, dozens of rural dialects co-existed side by side in the country. The situation has greatly changed since and specifically after the Second World War. 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 sense 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 pronunciation, 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.

The author draws conclusion that the dialects of the South-west should be studied as a system with deep historical roots. The main tendency of the language development in the South-west is removing local features and preserving regional ones which come back to the 10th century. The formation of the South-western regional variant on the basis of local territorial dialects is the main characteristic of the language situation in the South-west of England.

The comparative analysis of the phonetic system of the regional varieties of English pronunciation shows the differences in the pronunciation in the

system of consonant and vowel phonemes. On the whole, the problems of the regional dialects (its phonetic, grammar and lexical systems) open up wide vistas for further investigations.

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