**Varieties of English in Britain**

Introduction

All languages change over time and vary according to place and social setting. The way we speak is influenced by many factors — the roots of our elders, our social and educational background, our working environment, our friends and our own sense of identity. As we move across the country, we experience the changing landscape and architecture. At the same time, we notice a gradual change in the sounds we hear — the accents and dialects that immediately conjure up a sense of the place to which they belong. The terms accent and dialect are often used interchangeably, although in strict linguistic terms they refer to different aspects of language variation.

The aim of this project work is to gather the information about some of the varieties of English in Britain, make the peculiarities of each variety clearer.

In the United Kingdom and most of its former territories, English is the main language or at least one of the official languages. However, there are some significant differences in spelling, grammar, formatting, word usage and even abbreviations among the British Islands. The English language has always been a mix of diverse words, structures and sounds. At no point in time has the language been identical across the entire country and it is highly unlikely that it ever will be.

The given paper is devoted to the study of some of the varieties of English in Britain such as Standard English, Cockney, Estuary English (Southeast British), West Country (Southwest British), Midlands English, Northern England English, Geordie, Welsh English and received pronunciation and accent from other countries.

Dialect describes a language variety where a user’s regional or social background appears in his or her use of vocabulary and grammar. This description is a very open one, and there is continuing debate about its application to particular varieties. Before considering these, it may help to explain the related feature of accent. (Some linguists include accent, along with lexis and grammar, as a feature of dialect.)

Accent denotes the features of pronunciation (the speech sounds) that show regional or social identity (and arguably that of an individual, since one could have a personal and idiosyncratic accent).

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For many years, certain English dialects have been viewed more positively than others have. Many of us make assumptions based on the way people speak — judging certain dialects or accents as too posh, harsh, aggressive, unfriendly, ‘unintelligent’ or ‘common’. Unfortunately, many individuals have suffered because of this irrational prejudice. No one dialect is better at communicating meaning than another. The fact some dialects and accents are seen to be more prestigious than others is more a reflection of judgements based on social, rather than linguistic, criteria. All people live in an increasingly homogeneous society and so the vocabulary, structure and sounds that define the speech of a particular region, should be and indeed are for many speakers, a source of great pride and an important expression of cultural identity.

Definition of dialect and accent and their place in British English

 All languages change over time and vary according to place and social setting. The way people speak is influenced by many factors — the roots of their elders, social and educational background, working environment, friends and their own sense of identity. As you move across the country you experience the changing landscape and architecture. At the same time you notice a gradual change in the sounds — the accents and dialects that immediately conjure up a sense of the place to which they belong. The terms accent and dialect are often used interchangeably, although in strict linguistic terms they refer to different aspects of language variation.

A dialect is a specific variety of English that differs from other varieties in three specific ways: lexis (vocabulary), grammar (structure) and phonology (pronunciation or accent). English dialects may be different from each other, but all speakers within the English-speaking world can still generally understand them.

Accent, on the other hand, refers only to differences in the sound patterns of a specific dialect. In other words, dialect is the umbrella term for a variety of linguistic features, one of which is accent. True dialect speakers are relatively rare, but despite popular belief, all people speak with an accent.

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There are currently about 100 dialects in England, organized into nine regions: Southwest, Southeast, London, East, West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber, Northwest, and Northeast. The given paper is devoted to the study of some of the varieties of English in Britain such as Standard English, Cockney, Estuary English (Southeast British), West Country (Southwest British), Midlands English, Northern England English, Geordie, Welsh English and received pronunciation and accent from other countries.

Varieties of English in Britain

 Standard English

 Although Standard English is generally the most formal version of the language, a range of registers exists within Standard English, as is often seen when comparing a newspaper article with an academic paper, for example. A distinction also should be drawn between spoken and written standards. Spoken standards are traditionally looser than their written counterparts, and quicker to accept new grammatical forms and vocabulary. The various geographical varieties form a generally accepted set of rules, often those established by grammarians of the 18th century.

English originated in England during the Anglo-Saxon period, and is now spoken as a first or second language in many countries of the world, many of which have developed one or more "national standards". English is the first language of the majority of the population in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, and Barbados and is an official language in many others, including; India, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, and Nigeria.

As the result of historical migrations of English-speaking populations and colonization, and the predominant use of English as the international language of trade and commerce (lingua franca), English has also become the most widely used second language.[4] In countries where English is not either a native language or is not widely spoken, a native variant (typically English English or North American English) might be considered "standard" for teaching purposes.

Cockney

 Cockney is probably the second most famous British accent. It originated in the East End of London, but shares many features with and influences other dialects in that region.

The cockney dialect is an English dialect spoken in the East End of London, although the area in which it is spoken has shrunk considerably. It is typically associated with working class citizens of London, who were called cockneys, and it contains several distinctive traits that are known to many English speakers, as the dialect is rather famous.

The term “cockney” comes from a Middle English word, cokenei, which means “city dweller.” It is probably derived from a medieval term referring to the runt of a litter or clutch of eggs, which was used pejoratively to refer to people living in the then crowded, disease ridden, and dirty cities. The distinctive accent of working class Londoners, especially those living in the East End, was remarked upon by observers as long ago as the 17th century.

The primary characteristics of cockney dialect include the dropping of the letter “H” from many words, the use of double negatives, contractions, and vowel shifts which drastically change the way words sound. In addition, many consonants or combinations are replaced with other sounds, as is the case in “frushes” for “thrushes.” In some cases, the final consonant of a word is also dropped, for example “ova” for “over.”

One of the more unique aspects of cockney speech is cockney rhyming slang. Although rhyming slang is not used as extensively as some fanciful individuals might imagine, aspects of it are certainly used in daily speech. In cockney rhyming slang, a word is replaced with a phrase, usually containing a word which rhymes with the original word, for example “dog and bone” for “telephone.” Often, a word from the phrase is used as shorthand to refer to the initial word, as is the case with “porkies” for “lies,” derived from the rhyming slang “porkies and pies.”

Black Country accent

 The Black Country Accent is native (as an accent) to the Black Country Area of the UK. People that live in the Black Country are very proud of the way they speak. They have their own dialect and vocabulary as opposed to just being a different accent.

One of the most famous features is the

'yam yam' sound when saying certain phrases. 'You are' is pronounced yo'am and 'are you' is pronounced 'am ya'.

Vowels are also often changed. When people greet each other they use the phrase 'Yow awight' meaning 'you alright'.

Geordie

Geordie usually refers to both the people and dialect of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in Northeast England. The word may also refer to accents and dialects in Northeast England in general. I would classify this as a separate region from the rest of Northern England because it’s so radically different from the language spoken in nearby cities.

Features:

* The foot-stutmerger(see the Midlands description above).
* Non-rhoticity (in the cities at least)
* The /ai/ dipthong in kite is raised to IPA ɛɪ, so it sounds a bit more like American or Standard British “kate.”
* The /au/ dipthong in “about” is pronounced IPA u: (that is, “oo”) in strong dialects. Hence bout can sound like “boot.”

Consonants

Geordie consonants generally follow those of Received Pronunciation. The dialect is non-rhotic, like most Anglo-English dialects. This means speakers do not pronounce /r/unless it is followed by a vowel sound in that same phrase or prosodic unit. The rhotic sound (/r/) in Geordie is pronounced as [ɹ]. Some phonological characteristics of consonants specific to Geordie are listed as follows:

* /ɪŋ/ appearing in an unstressed final syllable of a word (such as in reading) is pronounced as [ən] (thus, reading is [ˈɹiːdən]).
* /ər/ appearing at the end of a word (such as in sugar) is pronounced as [a] (thus, sugar is [ˈʃʊɡa]).
* Yod-coalescence in both stressed and unstressed syllables (so that dew becomes [dʒuː]).
* T glottalization, in which /t/ is realised by [ʔ] before a syllabic nasal (e.g. button as [ˈbʊʔn]), in absolute final position (get as [ɡɛʔ]), and whenever the /t/ is intervocalic so long as the latter vowel is not stressed (pity as [ˈpɪʔi]).
* Other voiceless plosives are glottally reinforced in medial position, and preaspirated in final position.
* There is no dark L.

Vowels

Some characteristics of Geordie vowels are listed below:

* /æ/ specifically in the words had, have, has and having is pronounced as [ɛ].
* /ɛ/ specifically in words with the spelling "ea" (such as bread and deaf) may be pronounced as [iː].
* /əʊ/ specifically at the ends of words, with the spelling "ow" (such as in throw and follow) is pronounced as [a] in monosyllabic words (thus, throw as [ˈθɹa]) and [ə] in polysyllabic words (window as [ˈwɪndə]).
* There is some differentiation in pronunciation in the Geordie dialect based upon the speaker's sex. For example, English sound/aʊ/, pronounced generically in Geordie as [əʊ], may also have other, more specific pronunciations depending upon whether one is male or female. Males alone often pronounce the sound /aʊ/ as [uː], for example, the word house (/haʊs/) pronounced as[huːs]. Females, on the other hand, will often pronounce this sound as [eʉ], thus: [heʉs].

Welsh English

This refers to the accents and dialects spoken in the country of Wales. The speech of this region is heavily influenced by the Welsh language, which remained more widely spoken in modern times than the other Celtic languages.

Features:

* Usually non-rhotic.
* English is generally modelled after Received Pronunciation or related accents, but with many holdovers from the Welsh language.
* Syllables tend to be very evenly stressed, and the prosody of the accent is often very “musical”.
* The letter r is often trilled or tapped.
* Some dialect words imported from the Welsh language.

Short monophthong

* The vowel of cat /æ/ is pronounced as a more central near-open front unrounded vowel [æ̈]. In Cardiff, bag is pronounced with a long vowel [aː]. In Powys, a pronunciation resembling its New Zealand and South African analogue is sometimes heard, i.e.trap is pronounced /trɛp/
* The vowel of end /ɛ/ is a more open vowel and thus closer to cardinal vowel [ɛ] than RP
* The vowel of "kit" /ɪ/ often sounds closer to the schwa sound of above, an advanced close-mid central unrounded vowel [ɘ̟]
* The vowel of hot /ɒ/ is raised towards /ɔ/ and can thus be transcribed as [ɒ̝] or [ɔ̞]
* The vowel of "bus" /ʌ/ is pronounced [ɜ] and is encountered as a hypercorrection in northern areas for foot. It is sometimes manifested in border areas of north and mid Wales as an open front unrounded vowel /a/ or as a near-close near-back vowel /ʊ/in northeast Wales, under influence of Cheshire and Merseyside accents.
* In accents that distinguish between foot and strut, the vowel of foot is a more lowered vowel [ɤ̈], particularly in the north
* The schwa of better may be different from that of above in some accents; the former may be pronounced as [ɜ], the same vowel as that of bus
* The schwi tends to be supplanted by an /ɛ/ in final closed syllables, e.g. brightest /ˈbɾəi.tɛst/. The uncertainty over which vowel to use often leads to 'hypercorrections' involving the schwa, e.g. programme is often pronounced /ˈproː.ɡrəm/

Long monophthongs

Diphthongs of Welsh English as they are pronounced in Cardiff, from Coupland

* The vowel of car is often pronounced as a more central open back unrounded vowel [ɑ̈] and more often as a long open front unrounded vowel /aː/
* In broader varieties, particularly in Cardiff, the vowel of bird is similar to South African and New Zealand, i.e. a lowered close-mid front rounded vowel [ø̞]
* Most other long monophthongs are similar to that of Received Pronunciation, but words with the RP /əʊ/ are sometimes pronounced as [oː] and the RP /eɪ/ as [eː]. An example that illustrates this tendency is the Abercrave pronunciation of play-place [ˈpleɪˌpleːs]
* In northern varieties, /əʊ/ as in coat and /ɔː/ as in caught/court may be merged into /ɔː/ (phonetically [oː]).
* In Rhymney, the diphthong of there is monophthongised [ɛː]

Diphthongs

Fronting diphthongs tend to resemble Received Pronunciation, apart from the vowel of bite that has a more centralised onset [æ̈ɪ]

* Backing diphthongs are more varied
* The vowel of low in RP, other than being rendered as a monophthong, like described above, is often pronounced as [oʊ̝]
* The word town is pronounced similarly to the New Zealand pronunciation of tone, i.e. with a near-open central onset [ɐʊ̝]
* The /juː/ of RP in the word due is usually pronounced as a true diphthong [ëʊ̝]

Received Pronunciation

Received Pronunciation is the closest to a “standard accent” that has ever existed in the UK. Although it originally derives from London English, it is non-regional. You’ve probably heard this accent countless times in Jane Austen adaptations, Merchant Ivory films, and Oscar Wilde plays. It emerged from the 18th- and 19th-Century aristocracy, and has remained the “gold standard” ever since.

Features:

1. Non-rhoticity, meaning the r at the ends of words isn’tprounounced (mother sounds like “muhthuh”).

2. Trap-bath split, meaning that certain a words, like bath, can’t, and dance are pronounced with the broad-a in father. (This differs from most American accents, in which these words are pronounced with the short-a in cat.

The vowels tend to be a bit more conservative than other accents in Southern England, which have undergone significant vowel shifting over the past century.

Nasals and liquids (/m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/) may be syllabic in unstressed syllables. While the IPA symbol [ɹ] is phonetically correct for the consonant in 'row', 'arrow' in many accents of American and British English, most published work on Received Pronunciation represents this phoneme as /r/.

Voiceless plosives (/p/, /t/, /k/, /tʃ/) are aspirated at the beginning of a syllable, unless a completely unstressed vowel follows. (For example, the /p/ is aspirated in "impasse", with secondary stress on "-passe", but not "compass", where "-pass" has no stress.) Aspiration does not occur when /s/ precedes in the same syllable, as in "spot" or "stop". When asonorant /l/, /r/, /w/, or /j/ follows, this aspiration is indicated by partial devoicing of the sonorant. /r/ is a fricative when devoiced.

Syllable final /p/, /t/, /tʃ/, and /k/ may be either preceded by a glottal stop (glottal reinforcement) or, in the case of /t/, fully replaced by a glottal stop, especially before a syllabic nasal (bitten [ˈbɪʔn̩]). The glottal stop may be realised as creaky voice; thus, an alternative phonetic transcription of attempt [əˈtʰemʔt] could be [əˈtʰemm̰t].

As in other varieties of English, voiced plosives (/b/, /d/, /ɡ/, /dʒ/) are partly or even fully devoiced at utterance boundaries or adjacent to voiceless consonants. The voicing distinction between voiced and voiceless sounds is reinforced by a number of other differences, with the result that the two of consonants can clearly be distinguished even in the presence of devoicing of voiced sounds:

1. Aspiration of voiceless consonants syllable-initially.

2. Glottal reinforcement of voiceless consonants syllable-finally.

3. Lengthening of vowels before voiced consonants.

As a result, some authors prefer to use the terms "fortis" and "lenis" in place of "voiceless" and "voiced". However, the latter are traditional and in more frequent usage.

The voiced dental fricative (/ð/) is more often a weak dental plosive; the sequence /nð/ is often realised as [n̪n̪] (a long dental nasal). /l/ has velarised allophone ([ɫ]) in thesyllable rhyme. /h/ becomes voiced ([ɦ]) between voiced sounds.

Conclusion

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