

SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH OF VARIATION IN AMERICAN ENGLISH.

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Annotation: *This article also provides information on sociolinguistic studies of American English and how American English differ from others.*

Ushbu maqola, shuningdek, Amerika ingliz tilini sotsiolingvistik tadqiq qilish va Amerika ingliz tilining boshqalardan qanday farq qilishi haqida ma'lumot beradi.

В этой статье также представлена информация о социолингвистических исследованиях американского английского и о том, чем американский английский отличается от других.

Key words: *sociolinguistic, structures, principles, transformed.*

This study is an investigation into sociolinguistic variation in a second language. More specifically, it is an investigation into the extent to which speakers of English as a second language acquire particular features of the variety of English they are exposed to. The speakers in question are Polish migrants, and the variety of English is that found in Manchester, a city in the North West of England. The research uses data gathered from 41 participants who have been in Manchester for various lengths of time and who came to the UK for a wide range of reasons. The aim was to explore the extent to which local accent features are acquired by second language English speakers, and the linguistic and social factors which influence this acquisition. Methodologically, the research draws on practices from variationist sociolinguistics, but by using them in a second language context, the study has the additional aim of developing the link between these two areas of study. Four linguistic features were identified, on the basis of them each exhibiting local variants that differ from any pedagogical model of English the speakers will have been exposed to in Poland. All four demonstrated some degree of change towards the local variants in the speech of many of the participants, but to greatly differing degrees. Multiple regression analyses helped to determine which factors might be influencing the patterns of variation, with the social constraints of length of residence, level of English, gender, attitude, and identity among those believed to be playing a part. The thesis ends with a discussion exploring the implications of the findings in terms of existing and future research, and looks at how they might usefully be applied to situations outside that of academic linguistics. The study of language variation The pioneering work of William Labov in the late 1960s and early 1970s established an approach to quantitative studies of linguistic variation with the central belief that the alternative forms which can be found in all languages do not occur randomly but are in fact influenced either by external social factors, internal linguistic factors, or both. These two sets of factors are not always given equal attention and indeed

one may be more relevant than the other in any particular study; but for many variationists it is the interplay of these factors that is so interesting.

Methodologically, what sets variationist sociolinguistics apart from more traditional dialectology (and for that matter most SLA research) is the fundamental importance of accessing natural, spontaneous, unguarded speech, often termed ‘the vernacular’.

Research in the variationist approach, in contrast to research that seeks a single overarching explanation, assumes that interlanguage variation, like variation in any language, is likely to be subject to the influence of not one but multiple contextual influences. ... The question for the researcher is thus not which single factor is associated with variation, but what the relative strength of the different factors associated with variation is.

On the first occasion when a speaker employs a new feature in the absence of speakers of the variety originally containing this feature - when, in other words it is no longer accommodation ... when a British couple resident in the USA begin using American pronunciations or expressions in their own home, when no Americans are present . . . A study such as this which includes children would be valuable both in its own right, but also as a way of comparing and understanding the different processes involved between adults and children with regard to this type of acquisition. It would also add another perspective to the question of a sensitive period for dialect acquisition.

To conclude, the study has shown that non-native speakers can and do acquire features of the local accent in their spoken English, but that this acquisition is variable. It is variable in terms of whether or not an individual will exhibit signs of acquisition in the first instance, and it is variable in terms of the degree of that acquisition when it does occur. Just as with studies into people’s first language, this variation is influenced by a variety of linguistic and social factors, creating identifiable patterns. Some of these patterns reflect those found in first language studies, others show differences.

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