

ЛІНГВОДИДАКТИКА

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Andreiko L. V.,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,
Associate Professor of the Foreign Languages Department
of the Sumy State University,
Sumy, Ukraine.
l.andreiko@uabs.sumdu.edu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6294-6737>

Medvedovska D. O.,

Teaching Assistant of the Foreign Languages Department
of the Sumy State University,
Sumy, Ukraine.
darjamedvedovska@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6532-4108>

Skarloupina Yu. A.,

Teaching Assistant of the Foreign Languages Department
of the Sumy State University,
Sumy, Ukraine.
y.skarloupina@uabs.sumdu.edu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9710-3844>

**SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE
ON VARIETIES OF ENGLISH:
IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING**

In the modern globalised world, the position and status of the English language have changed significantly. From being a language spoken by a few nations, it has become the language of international communication or *lingua franca* used by speakers of different nationalities (Galloway & Rose, 2017). There is a widely held view that English no longer belongs to English speaking communities as the number of non-native speakers of English across the globe is growing steadily and exceeds the number of native speakers (Tan, 2020). Apart from native Englishes, there are New Englishes (English as a second/outer circle contexts) and English spoken by the rest of the world (English as a foreign language / expanding circle context) (Galloway & Rose, 2017). The notion of one standard language – the Queen’s English, or American English – has changed as well. According to Kachru and Smith (2009), „there are now multiple standard Englishes (Australian, Canadian, Caribbean, New Zealand, Indian, Nigerian, Philippine, Singaporean, and

others)" (p. 9). However, certain varieties of a language are still recognised as „standard”, whereas other varieties are viewed as less prestigious despite having equally rich and complex language systems. Therefore, many teachers and students still aim to „sound like a native speaker” and have certain stereotypes towards non-standard varieties.

The discussion on the language standardisation is mainly run around the two extremes that are described as "popular" and „expert” models (Weber & Horner, 2012). The „Popular” model postulates a hierarchical relationship between „languages” and „dialects” with a strong evaluative component that the former are superior to the latter (Weber & Horner, 2012). In the literature, advocates of this model have been described as „pedants” or „guardians of the language” who do not recognise its dynamic nature. Proponents of the „expert” model have quite liberal views on language norms, arguing that all varieties are equal in linguistic terms and (Weber & Horner, 2012). They state that language is not dependent on grammars and dictionaries as it existed before it was codified in a dictionary or grammar (Kachru & Smith, 2009).

This debate requires a teaching agenda that incorporates pedagogical approaches that raise awareness about different varieties of English and emphasise respect among speakers. A growing number of publications stress the need for teachers to be aware of these sociolinguistic issues and to critically apply them in language teaching (Galloway & Rose, 2017; Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2017; Tan et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is also research evidence that despite teachers' knowledge of different varieties of English and the fact that it enhances effective communication, most of the teachers believe that they should keep to the use of Standard English and teach established norms of grammar and pronunciation (Tomak and Kocabas, 2013). Similarly, students continue to view Standard English as the norm in learning and prefer native or native-like teachers (Tan et al., 2020). English teachers lack consensus about the implementation of sociolinguistic aspects such as English varieties in language pedagogy (Tan et al., 2020). Therefore, this article investigates the sociolinguistic nature of English varieties and the importance of teachers' sociolinguistic competence in language education.

The purpose of this article is to explore (1) why certain varieties of English language become recognised as 'standard' whereas other varieties are regarded as less prestigious or inferior, and to (2) elaborate on how this can be used in language pedagogy.

The issue of language standardisation is often presented as a negative development, with its drawbacks outweighing its merits. Moreover, the whole idea of grammar and dictionaries is frequently described throughout the sources in a slightly „sarcastic” manner. For example, Milroy and Milroy (2012) assume that if lexicographers remove all traces of value-judgement from their work and refuse to label particular tokens as „colloquial” or „slang”, there is likely to be a „public outcry” (p.4). The underlying message of such discourse is the division into general public and linguists (the elite), which represent „popular” and „expert” models, respectively.

The „Popular” model lines up with the „standard language ideology”, which identifies the language with certain norms as described in grammars and dictionaries. Its supporters argue that if the forms of the language were not fixed and legitimised, the language would have split up into dialects that may become mutually incomprehensible. A good example of this is what happened to Latin after the Roman Empire collapsed when the language was broken up into dialects which developed into Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian and others) (Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

The „Expert” model argues that there is no purely linguistic difference between languages and dialects (Weber & Horner, 2012). As Hudson (1980, p. 191) put it: „Linguists would claim that if they were simply shown the grammars of two different varieties, one with high and the other with low prestige, they could not tell which was which, any more than they could predict the skin colour of those who speak the two varieties” (cited in Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 6)

Milroy and Milroy (2012) describe the process of language standardisation as follows. After a variety is *selected*, it is *accepted* by influential people and then *diffused* geographically and socially by means of official papers, education, the writing system, as well as different kinds of discrimination against non-standard speakers. The next stage is that the standard language should be *maintained*. It is maintained through various ways: it is used by socially mobile people for utilitarian needs and by the most successful people in writing and, to a great extent, in speech. Another way of standard language maintenance is through promoting literacy, and the writing system is then perceived as the model for „correctness” (Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

Thus, standard language ideology is often discussed within the framework of notions of „correctness”, „acceptance”, and „prestige”, all of which reinforce social structures (Smith, 2019). According to Milroy and Milroy (2012), it encourages prescription in language and acknowledges only one correct way of using a linguistic item (at the level of pronunciation, spelling, grammar and meaning). In language guardians' opinion, any deviation from the norm is considered to have arisen from speaker's perversity, cognitive deficiency, illiteracy, barbarisms, stupidity, ignorance, moral degeneracy, etc. (Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

In Britain, the most frequently described variety of English (at the phonological level) that holds power and prestige is Received Pronunciation (RP). It is widely used as a reference point in dictionaries and as a model for teaching English as a foreign language. RP is seen as standard English, free of regional variations, and is also known as „BBC English”, „The Queen's English”, or „Oxford English”, however, as Robinson (2019) notes, this can be a little misleading as the English we hear in Oxford University or on BBC is no longer restricted to one type of accent. Even the Queen has shifted her accent over time to a more standard, „middle class” Southern English accent, „away from an extreme „conservative” form of RP” (Smith, 2019), which is

interpreted as an unconscious gesture of solidarity with the people (Robson, 2016).

To answer the question of why RP became recognised as a „standard” variety, Robinson (2019) explores the origin of RP, which can be traced back to the public schools and universities of the 19th century where members of the ruling and privileged classes studied. Their speech patterns based on the local accents of London, Oxford and Cambridge areas became to be associated with „the Establishment” and gained a unique status. In 1922 RP was selected by the BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English as a broadcasting standard. Robinson (2019) notes that for a considerable time, RP was the accent of the aristocracy and expensive public schools, which may have contributed to the somewhat negative perception of regional varieties of English. However, despite the fact the Received Pronunciation of Standard English has been heard constantly on the radio and then television for over 70 years, only 3 to 5 per cent of the population of Britain speaks RP (Milroy & Milroy, 2012). Furthermore, Trudgill (1999), as cited in Weber and Horner (2012), concluded that standard English is less than a language in the sense that it is only one variety among many which is normally used in writing and taught to non-native learners, but most native speakers of English speak another (non-standard) variety. According to Smith (2019), in popular culture, it is regional varieties that are thriving.

On a larger scale, regarding World Englishes, despite the increasing acceptance, there is still a strong standard ideology (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Regional variations of English are often viewed as „deficient” or „fossilized” versions. Such beliefs may stem from stereotypes surrounding English as well as viewing English-speaking countries as English owners. The indigenised Englishes of the Outer Circle are considered to be „illegitimate” offspring of English, while native English-speaker varieties are treated as the „legitimate” offspring because they are believed to have developed from Old English without „contamination” (Mufwene, 2001 as cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 46).

Milroy and Milroy (2012) distinguish between *language system* and *language use*, arguing that at the level of the *language system*, arguments that one language or dialect is linguistically superior to another are generally very difficult to prove. The authors state that notions of *superiority* or *inferiority*, *beauty* or *ugliness* and *logicality* or *illogicality* can be instrumental only at the level of *use*. They illustrate this based on the example of the spread of English in Australia at the expense of aboriginal languages, proving that it was due not to its superiority as a system of the language but to the greater economic and political success of its speakers. Thus, the authors prove that „judgments evaluating differences between standard and non-standard varieties are always socially conditioned and never purely linguistic” (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p.6).

Implications for teaching. Making students aware of language variations is considered inevitable by many teachers. This is one of the ways to avoid or, at least, to reduce misunderstandings and misinterpretations in foreign language communication.

Teaching language variations can also be a way of bringing the world into the classroom so that students, especially those of higher levels of language proficiency, can be fully aware of the fact that the language in their textbooks may differ from what they hear in TV series, Youtube or TikTok videos, songs or in the streets while travelling. According to Eliane da Rosa, „Variation may be classified into phonological, semantic, syntactic, regional, age-based, gender-related, stylistic, etc., i. e., language varies from person to person, from region to region, and across situations. And because of issues students should learn how language functions as well as being aware of the existence of the linguistic and cultural diversity in English” (Da Rosa, 2017)

Misunderstandings can happen even at lower levels of language proficiency; for instance, learners of British English can be confused by the attempts of Word software to change the spelling of „colour” into „color” or „favourite” into „favorite”.

The lack of relevance of a language course to real-life situations can result in the lack of inner motivation to learn a language; thus, the relevance of teaching linguistic diversity cannot be denied.

Students should understand that a language contains different types of dialects, variations and styles depending on the social, geographic, educational or professional background of a speaker. This can be achieved by using authentic materials such as texts, videos or podcasts. Obviously, different methods should be applied depending on the level of students' language competence, e.g. reading current articles on news websites, observing the differences in pronouncing „either” in „Downton Abbey” series, browsing online dictionaries or using game tools for finding British and American English equivalents or just paying attention to the usage of „gonna” instead of „going to” in a popular song. Advanced and proficient learners may benefit from such platforms as IDEA – International Dialects of English Archive (dialectsarchive.com) or Language is fun (englishdialectapp.com) while elementary or pre-intermediate learners may focus on differences between formal and informal ways of writing an email (for example, by doing an online quiz at quizizz.com).

In fact, teachers' and learners' attitudes towards using linguistic variation may vary. On the one hand, there exists an opinion that including language variations into foreign languages teaching can cause even more confusion, especially in the case of basic learners. Some researchers express concerns about possible complications in the assessment process as well (Stollhans, 2020). On the other hand, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages mentions sociolinguistic competencies (including knowledge of „linguistic markers of social relations; politeness conventions; expressions of folk-wisdom; register differences; and dialect and accent”) as one of the three components of communicative language competence (together with linguistic competences and pragmatic competences) (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 118).

It has been shown in this article that the social component is pivotal in understanding why certain varieties are regarded as less prestigious or inferior despite having equally rich and complex language systems. Also, especially in

relation to World Englishes, such factors as stereotypes and ownership have an impact on their status. Critical awareness of these sociolinguistic realities should be a necessary component of language pedagogy. English teachers should teach their students to recognise and respect language varieties. According to the studies reviewed in the previous section, this is one of the ways of reducing misunderstandings in communication, widen students' cultural horizons and raising motivation. More research is needed, though, to explore how sociolinguistic realities can be fully incorporated into language education.

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**Андрейко Л. В., Медведовська Д. О., Скарлупіна Ю. А.
Соціолінгвістичний підхід до висвітлення різновидів англійської мови в навчальному процесі**

У поданій статті досліджується проблема мовної стандартизації та соціолінгвістичні передумови різновидів англійської мови. Робота відповідає на питання, чому одні різновиди англійської мови визнаються „стандартними”, в той час як інші вважаються менш престижними або нижчими за статусом, підкреслюється важливість соціолінгвістичної компетентності для вчителів. Детально обговорюються дві моделі стандартизації мови („популярна” і „експертна”), що дають докладне пояснення процесу стандартизації та формування мовної ідеології. Описується історія виникнення найпопулярнішого різновиду англійської мови у Великій Британії „Received pronunciation”, вказуються причини, завдяки яким він став визнаним як „стандартний” різновид. У статті обговорюється потужна стандартна ідеологія щодо World Englishes і поточний стан регіональних варіацій англійської мови як його

„недосконалих” або „скам'янілих” версій. Питання високого або низького статусу різних різновидів розглядається в контексті понять „система мови” і „використання мови”. Показано, що соціальний компонент має вирішальне значення для розуміння того, чому певні різновиди вважаються менш престижними, незважаючи на те, що вони мають однаково багаті і складні мовні системи. На їх статус також впливають такі фактори, як стереотипи і належність до певного кола мовців. Стаття переходить до обговорення значення цих соціолінгвістичних аспектів для викладання. Підкреслюється важливість критичного усвідомлення викладачами соціолінгвістичних реалій. Представлені такі переваги підвищення обізнаності учнів про різновиди англійської мови як уникнення або зменшення непорозуміння й невірних тлумачень при спілкуванні іноземною мовою, формування уявлення про різноманітність акцентів та діалектів, розширення світогляду щодо інших культур, релевантність до реальних життєвих ситуацій. Наведено конкретні приклади роботи з різновидами англійської мови у викладацькій практиці.

Ключові слова: різновиди англійської мови, мовна стандартизація, мовна ідеологія, викладання англійської мови, статус, соціолінгвістика.

**Андрейко Л. В., Медведовская Д. А., Скарлупина Ю. А.
Социолингвистический подход к вопросу разновидностей
английского языка в контексте преподавания**

В данной статье исследуется проблема языковой стандартизации и социолингвистические корни разновидностей английского языка. Работа отвечает на вопрос, почему одни разновидности английского языка признаются „стандартными”, в то время как другие считаются менее престижными или более низкими по статусу, подчеркивается важность социолингвистической компетентности для учителей. Подробно обсуждаются две модели стандартизации языка („популярная” и „экспертная”), дающие подробное объяснение процесса стандартизации и формирования языковой идеологии. Описывается наиболее популярная разновидность английского языка в Великобритании, „Received pronunciation”, указываются причины, благодаря которым она стала признанной „стандартной” разновидностью. В статье обсуждается сильная стандартная языковая идеология по отношению к World Englishes и текущее положение региональных вариаций английского языка как его „несовершенных” или „окаменелых” версий. Вопрос статусности различных разновидностей рассматривается в контексте понятий „система языка” и „использования языка”. Показано, что социальный компонент имеет решающее значение для понимания того, почему определенные разновидности считаются менее престижными или низкими несмотря на то, что они имеют одинаково богатые и сложные языковые системы. На статус разновидностей также влияют такие факторы, как стереотипы и принадлежность к определенному кругу носителей. Статья переходит к обсуждению значения этих социолингвистических аспектов для

преподавания. Подчеркивается важность критического осознания учителями социолингвистических реалий. Представлены такие преимущества повышения осведомленности учащихся о разновидностях английского языка как предотвращение или уменьшение недопонимания и неверных толкований при общении на иностранном языке, принятие языкового и культурного разнообразия, релевантность к реальным жизненным ситуациям. Приведены конкретные примеры работы с языковыми разновидностями в преподавании.

Ключевые слова: разновидности английского языка, языковая стандартизация, языковая идеология, преподавание английского языка, статус, социолингвистика

**Andreiko L. V., Medvedovska D. O., Skarloupina Yu. A.
Sociolinguistic perspective on varieties of English: implications for teaching**

The article explores the issue of language standardisation and sociolinguistic roots of varieties of English. It answers the question why some varieties of the English language become recognised as „standard” whereas other varieties are regarded as less prestigious or inferior and advocates the importance of sociolinguistic competence for teachers. Two models of language standardisation (the „popular” and the „expert” model) are critically discussed, providing a detailed explanation of the process of language standardisation and the formation of standard language ideology.

The most frequently described variety of English in the UK, the Received Pronunciation, is described in greater detail, tracking down the reason why it has become recognised as the "standard" variety. A strong standard ideology with World Englishes and the current position of regional variations of English as its „deficient” or „fossilized” versions is discussed. The notions of language system and language use are considered in relation to the superiority or inferiority of different varieties. It has been shown that the social component is pivotal in understanding why certain varieties are regarded as less prestigious or inferior despite having equally rich and complex language systems. Such factors as stereotypes and ownership have an impact on their status too. The article proceeds to the discussion of implications of these sociolinguistic aspects for teaching. The importance of teachers' critical awareness of sociolinguistic realities is emphasised. Such benefits of raising students' awareness of varieties of English are presented: avoiding or reducing misunderstandings and misinterpretations in foreign language communication, recognising linguistic and cultural diversity, demonstrating relevance to real-life situations. Specific examples of practising language varieties are given.

Key words: varieties of English, World Englishes, language standardisation, language ideology, Received Pronunciation, teaching English, language use.

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