

AFRO-AMERICAN VARIANT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: ON THE QUESTION OF THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

АФРО-АМЕРИКАНСЬКИЙ ВАРІАНТ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ: ДО ПИТАННЯ ПРО ПОХОДЖЕННЯ ТА ІСТОРІЮ РОЗВИТКУ

Ismayilova Parvana Mahir,

orcid.org/0009-0000-4046-6452

PhD at the Department of English Language and Literature student

Khazar University,

Lecturer

Azerbaijan University of Languages

The article examines the history of formation of Afro-American variant of the English language. This topic has been analyzed by many scientists of such sciences as linguistics, literature, history, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, etc. In our article, we analyze the origin and history of the development of the Afro-American variant of the English language from the point of view of Germanic studies. The article is based on research mainly by American and English scientists. We also considered four hypotheses about the formation of the Afro-American variant of the English language. Some sources note mainly two hypotheses, in our case the problem is considered in a broader context. The idea is also explored that the Afro-American variant of the English language is not just a dialect, but a social dialect that combines Africanisms and Anglicisms.

Previously, well-known scientists claimed that the language of black people was different from the language of white people because of some physical and mental differences. Finally, scientists have shown that there are no such differences between existing races. Their physical differences may exist, but they are not related to speech differences. A lot of sociolects are formed due to the territorial and social habitat alone, a fact demonstrated by African-Americans who speak ordinary English, identical to white people of the same regional, social and educational level.

In Afro-American variant of the English language, the word *nigger* is very widely used, which in the American version is considered offensive. One of its meanings in this variant is "friend", which is sometimes used in the meaning of a dog. Apparently, this has a connotation with the dog's devotion, which means "close friend".

The history of the emergence of the Afro-American variant of the English language still causes controversy and generates hypotheses. As we have already noted, this option is the main socio-ethnic variety of the American standard. There are still four main theories of the origin of the Afro-American variant of the English language: the hypothesis of Anglicists, Creolists, neo-Anglicists and substratum.

Key words: Afro-American variant of the English language, linguistics, history of formation, language situation, levels of language, Germanic languages.

У статті розглядається історія формування афроамериканського варіанту англійської мови. Ця тема була проаналізована багатьма вченими таких наук, як Лінгвістика, Література, Історія, Соціологія, культурологія, психологія та ін. У нашій статті ми аналізуємо походження та історію розвитку афроамериканської версії англійської мови з точки зору германістики. Стаття заснована на дослідженнях, в основному американських і англійських вчених. Ми також розглянули чотири гіпотези щодо формування афроамериканської версії англійської мови. Деякі джерела відзначають в основному дві гіпотези, в нашому випадку проблема розглядається в більш широкому контексті. Також досліджується ідея про те, що афроамериканська версія англійської мови – це не просто діалект, а соціальний діалект, що поєднує африканізм та англіцизм.

Раніше відомі вчені стверджували, що мова чорношкірих відрізняється від мови білих людей через деяких фізичних і ментальних відмінностей. Нарешті, вчені довели, що між існуючими расами немає таких відмінностей. Їх фізичні відмінності можуть існувати, але вони не пов'язані з мовними відмінностями. Багато соціолектів формуються лише завдяки територіальному та соціальному середовищу існування, що демонструють афроамериканці, які розмовляють звичайною англійською мовою, ідентичною білому населенню того ж регіонального, соціального та освітнього рівня.

Афро-американська версія англійської мови дуже широко використовує слово *nigger*, яке в американській версії вважається образливим. Одним із його значень у цьому варіанті є «друг», який іноді використовується у значенні собаки. Очевидно, це пов'язано з відданістю собаки, що означає «близький друг».

Історія появи афроамериканської версії англійської мови досі викликає суперечки і породжує гіпотези. Як ми вже зазначали, цей варіант є основним соціально-етнічним різновидом американського стандарту. Досі існують чотири основні теорії походження афроамериканської версії англійської мови: гіпотеза англіцистів, креолістів, неоангліцистів та субстрат.

Ключові слова: афро-американський варіант англійської мови, лінгвістика, історія формування, мовна ситуація, рівні мови, германські мови.

The problem statement. Afro-American variant of the English language refers to one of the variants of

American English. This version of English is used by the African-American population. There is an opinion

that this variant of English functions in a certain situation and circumstances due to how and in what context this variant is used. Afro-American variant of the English language, along with other variants of American English, is an unchanged version of the language. This variant of the language has its own language system, which includes all language levels and has certain rules.

Afro-American variant of the English language has had various names at different times. There are – “American Negro Speech, Negro Dialect, Nonstandard Negro English, Black Dialect, Black Communications, Black Street Speech, Black English Vernacular, Black English” [6, p. 6].

Many studies have been devoted to this problem. The most interesting among them should be noted in terms of the topicality of this problem [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6 and etc.].

The purpose of the article is to analyse the history of formation and to show specific peculiarities of Afro-American variant of the English language.

The main material. In the second decade of the XX, linguists persistently engaged in research in the field of this object. This included all dialects of the English language. In addition to studying each variant separately, linguists focused on identifying links between different variants of the English language. At the same time, they began to investigate the history of the formation of the Afro-American variant of the English language [6; 8; 19].

Afro-American variant of the English language is a part of the African-American socio-ethnic and territorial reality. This variant is of particular interest due to the fact that this version has elements of sociolect and slang, including dialect and characterized by the fact that it appeared as a result of various historical, social and cultural reasons. As we already know, a dialect is a means of communication between people in a language who live on the same territory. A social dialect is like a variety of language used within a social age, profession, group etc. Slang is the most mobile layer of vocabulary, which is an accurate reflection of the linguistic picture of the world of representatives of a certain culture. According to certain linguists in the field of Germanic studies, the English language of black people serves for the communication of all African-Americans. This variant of the language is considered as an independent American version of the language and has all language levels like all other languages.

American sociolinguists paid most attention to the study of the socio-ethnic dialect of English, which was used among African-Americans. Some bilingual situations were also taken into account here.

As we know, dialects are used in the language of local nationalities and in the literary language. The standard American version of the English language itself plays a role in the formation of the Afro-American variant of the English language, which created it, including its external form.

The external form of the language was formed with the help of social factors. Subculture and rich cultural traditions occupy a huge place here. We believe that the present version of English is a sociolect. This is a part of speech that is used by the population of a certain social group.

In the origin and history of the development of the English language in America, especially in the Caribbean Islands, it is necessary to give a special role to the island of Barbados, where the first English settlers appeared in the south-east of this island in 1627. Later since 1640, the Irish, deported as a result of Oliver Cromwell’s policy, began to actively settle the island, which led to the local population mastering not only British English, but also the Irish dialect. In general, the process of learning English was slow, haphazard and ineffective; syntactic models, as a rule, were borrowed from substratum languages, and basic grammatical constructions were borrowed from the superstrate.

In linguistics, when studying a particular language, first of all pay attention to its origin, language levels, lexical composition, etc. These traditions are also present in the Afro-American variant of the English language. Here we are talking about phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical levels. Having all the linguistic and speech features, this language was formed with the help of some social factors that distinguishes it from other variants of the English language.

In the modern world, Afro-American variant of the English language has a linguistic system. This system combines the main linguistic structures and variability. “African-Americans make up more than 1/8 of the entire US population, and Afro-American variant of the English language occupies a special place among American dialects not only because of the large number of its speakers, but also because of its significant contribution to many aspects of American pop culture. So, in addition to appearance, young Americans have been copying the style, manners, vocabulary and pronunciation features of dark-skinned street idols for several decades: *Dude, jazz, groovy, cool, chill out* and *girl* – these and other words did not originate from Afro-American variant of the English language, but received a rebirth, thanks to new slang meanings” [9, p. 157].

The first hypothesis is the hypothesis of the Anglicists, which arose in the middle of the XX century. It should be noted that first the “Linguistic Atlas of the United States of America and Canada” (LAUS) (1928–1930) was created by American dialectologists, and the hypothesis of Anglicists is based on numerous studies of this atlas, where regional variants of the English language are given. But this grandiose project was only partially implemented. Within the framework of this atlas, the “Linguistic Atlas of New England” (LANE) was compiled under the leadership of G. Kurat. It was based on the European dialectological tradition.

It should be noted that the identification of different dialects of the American version of English is based on a close mixing of social and territorial-ethnic characteristics.

The linguistic atlas of New England contributed to the fact that American dialectologists were able to find rich factual material. This, in turn, helped to significantly update the history of the formation of dialect differences in the American version of the English language. American dialectologists have also been able to largely clarify the dialect structure of modern English in the United States. At the same time, the atlas data also gave some idea of the social processing of dialect speech. However, the problems of social differentiation of language occupied a secondary place.

American dialectologists give a significant role to the question of the origin of the Afro-American variant of the English language. For them, this problem needs to be considered in a broad context. There is also such an assumption that Afro-American variant of the English language is characterized by a phenomenon where some archaic features of Eastern English dialects are predominant. Here we are talking about the influence of dialects of the American South. According to this opinion, they played a role in the formation of this version of the English language.

In their work, it is possible to identify the fact that the speech of white and dark-skinned elderly Americans belonging to the same territory had the same features. It can be assumed that this refers to the early English dialects of the British Isles. Because American scientists explain it by its historical development.

As we have already noted above about the four hypotheses of the emergence of Afro-American variant of the English language. We are talking here about the emergence and development of the Anglicist hypothesis. This primarily applies to the second half of the twentieth century. But after the development of this concept, a creolist hypothesis arises. A

number of scientists adhere to this hypothesis. They believe that Afro-American variant of the English language originated from the Creole language. The Creole language existed mainly in the southern part of the USA. A contact language is a form of natural language that has emerged as a result of the mixing of two languages. Such a language becomes native to other generations of native speakers of this language. There is a difference in the fact that Creole languages are most related to natural languages. Ethnic groups speak these languages.

The followers of this hypothesis, the Creolist hypothesis, believed that the Creole language had common features with the Creole variants of the English language of the contingent of Africa and the Caribbean Islands. It is assumed that the Gullah language originated from this language, since African-Americans living on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia still speak this language. The significant long-term contact that was present between the Creole language and other American versions of English contributed to the fact that they got closer and decreolization turned out. Despite this, some features of the Creole language can also be found in modern Afro-American variant of the English language.

Scientists who adhere to this hypothesis, speaking of African and Creole elements, consider them to be the central position in the formation of this variant of the English language. They note that prehistoric elements of African languages have been preserved in the speech of generations belonging to Afro-American culture. And their ancestors were once brought to America. Thus, these ancestors spread to the northern part of America and their sociolects may influence the development of this version. The same Africanisms that prevailed in their speech appeared in the lexical composition of Afro-American variant of the English language.

“This includes such units as buckra *white man* < mbakara *master* in the Ibibio language (Southern Nigeria), cooter *turtle* < kuta in the Bambara and Malinke languages, goober *peanut* < nguba in the Kimbundu language, voodoo *belief in witchcraft, shamanism, incantation* < Vodou *protective spirit* in the Fon and Yu languages, yam *sweet potato* < nyambi in the Bantu language, chigger (chigo, chego, chiego) *flea, tick* < jiga *insect* in the Wolof language” [5, p. 91].

The presence of a Creole element in Afro-American variant of the English language is criticized by R. McDavid [11]. He believes that the elements that realist scientists usually refer to other versions of the English spoken by white Americans.

Some of these elements belong to the common American vernacular, in which there is double negation, reduction of consonants, etc. "South American English was also born in mind, as it is to share some grammatical features with AAVE as well as standard English to contract basic forms with standard numbers" [10, p. 7].

"From a genetic linguistics perspective, AAVE's vocabulary is as English as that of any North American English variety; it is not more divergent from Standard American English than, say, Appalachian, Ozark, or Amish English. Its phonology and grammar are very similar to those of American White Southern English (AWSE) varieties and to some extent different from those of Gullah and other AECs, despite partial similarities pointed out regarding the syntactic distribution of the copula and lack of subject-verb agreement in the present tense" [12, p. 351].

The next hypothesis is that of the neo-Anglicists. Its appearance dates back to the end of the twentieth century. This hypothesis did not arise from scratch. Its followers take the letters of slaves as the basis of this hypothesis. According to them, former slaves wrote them, and on the basis of these letters, one can see this hypothesis. That is, Afro-American variant of the English language at an early stage of development did not have such significant differences with postcolonial American dialects. Because this hypothesis, like the first one, gives the idea to believe that Afro-American variant of the English language, which arose after postcolonial politics, did not differ from the early British dialects brought to North America. But despite this, the followers of this hypothesis believe that the variants of the English language have become very different over the past two centuries and now Afro-American variant of the English language has little in common with modern American slang dialects.

It is important to note that Afro-American variant of the English language has an integral structure, unity of forms and consistency with respect to the laws and regulations existing in it. But despite this, Afro-American variant of the English language is strongly influenced by elements of West African languages.

The fourth hypothesis is the substrate hypothesis. The essence lies in the fact that Afro-American variant of the English language was strongly influenced by the long-term contact of Africans and Europeans. In this regard, there has been a change in language structures, primarily at the level of grammar, vocabulary and phonetics. It can be concluded that this hypothesis is based on the

fact that at the beginning of development in Afro-American variant of the English language there were a large number of local language characteristics. Among other dialects, African substrate languages had a strong influence. They led to the fact that "Afro-American variant of the English language became in a discrete form, that is, it stood out among other dialects" [20; 8].

In contrast to the "Anglicist" hypothesis, "already in the second half of the twentieth century, a "substrate" hypothesis was put forward, according to which Afro-American variant of the English language is the result of language contacts between speakers of English dialects of early settlers and speakers of English-based Creoles" [20, p. 223].

As we have already noted above, the peculiarities of the African language played a role in the formation of the Afro-American variant of the English language, and other factors cannot be excluded. The originality of some South American and North American dialects also gave an undoubted contribution to the development of this variant. It was also influenced by English speech patterns. Thus, the modern African-American version of English is very close to the English language and at the same time expresses many characteristic elements of African culture and sharply contrasts with the European tradition.

Conclusion. Approaching the results, we can conclude that Afro-American variant of the English language has a pronounced emotional linguistic tinge. This variant is characterized by linguistic specificity, originality and uniqueness. Regional disunity can also be added here. Here the main factor manifests itself in the study of the dialect and the question of its formation. It should be noted that this variant of the English language goes back to the African-Americans themselves. Once upon a time, many years ago, they were brought to North America as slaves. But they communicated with each other in West African languages. These languages then became the basis for the formation of the Afro-American variant of the English language. But African slaves in America studied English and in turn tried to bring it closer to the system of their native language. This applies to lexical, grammatical and phonetic elements.

Afro-American variant of the English language turns out to be primarily the language of informal communication among friends and relatives, while standard American English is used in more formal communication. Native speakers of Afro-American variant of the English language have a fairly clear idea of how to speak their language correctly, what corresponds to the norm and what goes beyond it.

Afro-American variant of the English language is not a dialect or a language. This language variant is Creole, used by African-Americans as a means of international communication, which includes the basics of English as the main source. Consequently, it has been investigated that it is a Creole.

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