

THE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTICS CHARACTERISTICS OF COCKNEY. METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Personally, my mind has been intrigued by Cockney dialect and rhyming slang ever since I moved to the East London area. The Rhyming Slang and the Cockney accent with all the word play evolved, and kept amusing me, especially as I constantly encountered new words. The question of origins also evokes many questions. Writing this bachelor thesis on Cockney slang and trying to answer some of the questions that have come up during the years, seems an ideal way of combining duty and pleasure.

The research goal is to analyse where Cockney slang originated and how it is used in everyday language. To prove the existence of that variety of English, there will be many different fields, in which we can see how it is used and where in language we can detect cockney easier without the need to study it closely. Cockney is a slang which is very popular, especially with Londoners. However cockney is also popular in many different English speaking countries. The objective of this bachelor thesis is to present how we can recognise a cockney dialect, and how we can use it in learning English.

The analysis is devoted to the general information about Standard English and varieties of it and especially to accent and slang.

The research presents the history, traditions in food, clothes and existence of Cockney culture on public TV and radio, introduces a Rhyming Slang followed by a practical linguistics analysis of grammar, pronunciation and phrases used by Cockney people, explains how different Cockney grammar is from Standard English, and how the phrases are built, presents the aims and methods of incorporating elements of Cockney in to foreign language tuition.

Cockney rhyming slang originated in the East End of London

Some slang expressions have escaped from London and are in popular use throughout the rest of Britain.

For example “use your loaf” is an everyday phrase for the British, but not too many people realise it is Cockney Rhyming Slang is “loaf of bread head. There are many more examples of this unwilling use of Cockney Rhyming Slang.

Television has raised awareness of Cockney Rhyming Slang to far greater heights. Classic TV shows such as “Steptoe and son” “Porridge” and “Only Fools and Horses” have done much to spread the slang throughout Britain and to the rest of the world.

Cockney Rhyming Slang may have had its highs and lows but today it is in use as never before.

A lot of people learn foreign languages nowadays. For several reasons people do this to communicate with people in other countries. Some people want to communicate with other people in other countries for their work or simply in order to make new friendships. An important reason for learning a foreign language could be a yearning for getting to know about other cultures. Whatever the reason is, if someone wants to bring their skills to a higher level, they should know how native speakers of the particular language speak among themselves. To know the language as taught according to the standards in school does not seem to be enough. To reach this goal, a learner has to focus on dialects and accents.

Cockney is not an ordinary example of a dialect. Origins of the rhyming slang, that is an inseparable part of Cockney, can be traced back to the ages, when it was spoken only by people involved in criminal activities – Cockney was born as an argot. It was a “secret code” in a way. It enabled people to communicate without being interfered by others. Later on Cockney became popular amongst broader population of Londoners and it managed to survive till the present day.

Apart from its origin, attention has been paid to Cockney’s formal features such as changes in grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary, because these are also phenomena that make Cockney unique.

Unfortunately, it was recently rumoured that Cockney was being swept into the periphery replaced by a new slang – Jafaican. Therefore a short questionnaire based survey was conducted in order to find out the truth.

The work in hand familiarizes the reader with Cockney’s roots as well as its development across many centuries, including periods of popularity and periods of neglect. However, Cockney is still alive and after 150 years it is surprisingly thriving. Will this trend continue well into the 21st century?