

FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OF HIGH SOCIETY IN GREAT BRITAIN

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The purpose of the article is to give the reader some information about the history of the English language and its connection with various social classes of British society. The author of the article compares the linguistic features of the English language of different social classes and determines which linguistic features are characteristic of the British aristocracy and members of the royal family. In conclusion the article reads about the need to preserve the classical English language despite the influence of foreign borrowings.

Key words: history of the English language; development of the English language; borrowings in English; nobility's English; the Queen's English.

The history of the English language spans more than one century. This language has come a long way of development and formation. Today it is the language of international communication, as well as the native language of the former British colonies: America, Australia, New Zealand, etc. But at the present stage, the English language is undergoing a number of modifications. The aim of our research is to return to the origins of this language. We will consider the true language of the British nobility, taking into account its features.

As you know, for centuries in England, social status played a huge role in community development. It was the position in society that was an indicator of attitude towards a person. This also applied to English.

In Elizabeth's time, the use of linguistic means and rules of communication at court was approved as a model for the language in general. The monarchy was associated with correct English in the time of Queen Victoria. Then writers continued to appeal to the nobility for support and to act as patrons to their work on the language [1, p. 120]. The processes of change of all linguistic phenomena are closely connected with the development of class analysis within sociolinguistics [2, p. 18-19]. This or that lexical unit or grammar category can be equally applied as refined or vulgar depending on whether it is used by upper or lower classes.

Because of this, many different varieties of English have stood out: English of the working class, English of the middle class, English of the aristocracy, English of London and its suburbs, English of cities and villages. And despite the fact that in the modern world the division of society into social strata has been abolished, in the United Kingdom, in the subconscious of people, the importance of identifying what social class you come from still remains.

Therefore, it is by speech that it is now easiest to understand the origin of your interlocutor. Historically, the English language includes many loanwords. Most widely and commonly used words come from French, German and Latin. The speech of the upper class of society in England has always been characterized as pure, correct, but rather prim and long. At the same time, the British nobility tried to use the minimum number of borrowed words in their speech, believing that this has affected the purity of real English. This was especially important after the period when the English nobility spoke French (from the XIth to XIVth centuries). This period of English history dates back to the period of the Norman Conquest, that is why the spread of the French language was so widespread [3, p. 83].

Consequently, the frequent use of borrowed words has never been a sign of aristocratic origin, but on the contrary of low origin. This is due to the fact that people of the lower classes used them in their speech in order to appear nobler, while the nobility considered it vulgar. It should be noted that not only the use of borrowings in speech, but also the incorrect use of native English words, can give out in a person his origin.

In support of this, several examples should be considered.

Pardon. It is widely believed that «Pardon?» is a more polite way of asking someone to repeat something spoken or trying to get someone's attention than «sorry», but for the nobility it sounds like a curse word. They always use «Sorry?» or «What?» instead.

Lounge. «Lounge» and «living room» are most frequently used words denoting a main living space. The aristocracy prefer to say «drawing room» or «sitting room», though.

Mom and dad. As usual, most of us call our parents «mom» and «dad» as we get older, but the noble family call their parents «mummy» and «daddy» even as adults.

Tea. Many people in the United Kingdom call their main evening meal «tea». As for the royal family and upper classes, they always call it «dinner» or «supper». But «dinner» is usually more official than «supper».

Toilet. Apparently, the aristocratic family don't really like using in their speech words that come from French. As a result, it was impossible to hear, for example, the Queen saying «toilet», as «loo» or «lavatory» were her preferred terms.

It is important to note that people of aristocratic origin never boast about it. This also shows up in English. These people will prefer to use such polite euphemisms about the people and phenomena of the working class as: «low-income groups», «less privileged», «ordinary people», «less educated», «the man in the street», «tabloid readers», «blue collar» etc.

So, we can say that English of nobility is «classic» English. It is characterized by:

Clear pronunciation with distinctive vowel and consonant sounds.

Using Standard English spelling, grammar and vocabulary.

A lack of informal slang or regional dialect words [4].

What concerns the Queen's English, it can be called a special form of English. There was a day when it was as rough as primitive inhabitants. At those times the monarch and especially his speech, manner of speaking were the direct personification of his subjects not only in his own country, but also in front of other states. Centuries have laboured at levelling, hardening, widening the monarch's English. Previously, there was an opinion that new rules, so commonly made for the English language, are in reality not contributions towards its purity, but the main instruments of its deterioration. The greatest offenders were the country journals.

Queen Elizabeth II, for instance, spoke an almost unique form of English, unlike the language we hear at Oxford University [5]. However, over time, even her royal accent changed. The Queen didn't often use the Queen's English. But when we talk about the British royal family, it should be noted that it is associated with another linguistic quirk. The quirk is called the royal «we».

The royal «we», or majestic plural, is a grammatical quirk where someone refers to themselves with the plural pronoun «we» instead of the singular «I» [4]. It is often associated with Queen Victoria and the phrase «We are not amused». At first, it was King Henry II who adopted this royal «we» to show his power was bestowed by God and that he and the deity were acting as a whole. Now monarchs, popes, and politicians have all used the royal «we» since, although the practice is less common.

In conclusion, it should be said that the English language continues to develop and modernize. However, in order to avoid the influence of slang and foreign borrowings, it is important to keep the language in its true form, despite the fact that it may seem outdated and sophisticated.

References

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