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DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2710-4656/2024.4.1/06>**Mammadova G. A.**

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**ON THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH**

*The question of the variants of English in the last century has been increasing in modern linguistics. Observations show that the increase of scientific interest in Americanism in the 19th century led to the research and study of regional dialects of the American variant of the English language in the 20th century. One can observe that the study of dialects, their division criteria and, most importantly, linguistic features are considered to be urgent issues of American philology in the modern stage of linguistic science in the United States of America after the Second World War. With the increase of scientific interest in Americanism in the 19th century, the research and study of regional dialects increased significantly.*

*The social dialects associated with national identity are African American English, Chicano English, Southern White English, New England English, Smoky Mountains English, Appalachian English, more precisely, there are ethnolects in America today.*

*The possibility of mutual influence between the regional and social dialects of the American variant of the English language has also been revealed. The mutual influence between the regional and social dialects of the American variant of the English language includes the explanation of existing phonetic, grammatical and lexical similarities and differences between both regional and social dialects. The research work can also be considered the first source that serves to enrich practical and theoretical knowledge about the linguistic features of the dialects of the American version of the English language.*

*The results obtained from the study are important in the study of the linguistic features of the American variant of the English language and its social and regional dialects.*

*The theoretical importance of the research, with its unique place in the methodology of studying foreign language dialects, determines new attitudes and views towards the American version of the English language. There is an opportunity to use the results of the research in theoretical studies on the analysis of the linguistic and dialectological features of the American version of the English language.*

*The aim of the study is to describe the historical formation process of African American English; to study linguistic features of African American English.*

**Key words:** *English, variants, African-American, linguistic, historical.*

**Introduction.** Studying the languages that people speak such as in Switzerland, in Norway, in Belgium and some other parts of the world, it is necessary to consider two issues: 1) The first is the state language, and the second is the language spoken by the people. According to statistics, 4 languages are officially recognized as state languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian and Retro-Romance. Three languages are also in use in Belgium: French, which is an ethnic minority, but used by the Walloons living in the capital, the Dacian (Flemish) language, which is the ethnic majority, and the language of the Germans living in the south of Belgium. The situation in Ireland is also complicated. Southern Ireland lives as an independent state, where 15 million people speak their national language – Irish. The population there speaks Irish (Gaelic) among themselves [Veysalli 2007, p. 90].

R. Quirk wrote that the use of language is the main indicator of national identity. Therefore, people in the United States often want to show that the language of this country should be recognized as a language different from British English [Quirk R., et al 1997, p. 2–3]. Thanks to N. Webster, new works on the grammar and spelling of the English language appeared in the United States. The English language began to spread gradually in Canada in the 18th century, and then that language was transferred to India. It had set foot in Australia and South Africa by the end of the century [Webster 1828, p. 9]. English is becoming a global language in today's globalized world. Economic, cultural, political, technical, etc. while globalization is going on in the fields, there is no doubt that there is globalization in terms of language as well. Now, English has gained the status of

an official language in more than 70 countries of the world. D. Crystal expresses his attitude to this issue on page 3 of the book “English as a Global Language” and presents the names of those countries at the end of chapter 2 [Crystal 2002, p. 57–60].

**Discussion.** A dialect formed on the basis of national identity is called “ethnolect” in sociolinguistics. The United States has been a multiethnic society. The English language that developed in North America was never isolated from other languages. Having arrived in North America in the early 17th century, the continent was inhabited by millions of aboriginal people speaking different languages. Moreover, English was only one of three major European colonial languages brought to North America: the first English settlements on the Atlantic coast were established between French settlements to the north and Spanish settlements to the south and west; there were smaller groups of Dutch, Germans and Swedes who managed to adapt to the British colonial enterprise, and even the English-speaking group itself was not a single ethnic group: in addition to the English, there was also a strong representation of Scottish and Irish speakers with their own dialects. The social dialects associated with national identity are African American English, Chicano English, Southern White English, New England English, Smoky Mountains English, Appalachian English, more precisely, there are ethnolects in America today.

There have been some views in the history of linguistics about the origins of African-American vernacular English:

1) Some scholars suggest that Afro-American Vernacular English originated from West African and Niger-Congo languages, as some grammatical features from these languages can be found in this dialect. These features are impossible to be found in other varieties of the English language, so some scholars call African-American vernacular English a special one [Nazarova 2006, p. 211].

2) Afro-American vernacular English is a creole that ceased to be a creole. Some linguists still do not agree on whether African American Vernacular English is a language or a dialect.

From our point of view, Afro-American vernacular English is an ethnic dialect with unique phonetic, grammatical and lexical features. Our study of the origins of African-American Vernacular English suggests that Africans spoke their tribal languages when they were brought to America as slaves. An interesting fact is that most of the slaves were sent only to the southern states, and the southern white American entrepreneurs themselves did not have the skills to

speak the American version of Standard English correctly and fluently. Most of the first group of slaves from Africa to America never learned English, but their children grew up bilingual. One of these languages was the tribal language taught to them by their parents and the other was English.

This dialect, spoken by the majority of the American population, has gained several names throughout history: Afro-American English, Afro-American Vernacular English and Ebonics, etc. [Nikolaeva 2011, p. 2]. In 1960, when the study of the African-American dialect began, this dialect was called “Negro speech”, “Negro English” or “Negro American dialect”. In the official circles of the country (Spanish Negro – black), those who came to the conclusion that the name “Negro” was wrong, then in 1970, they replaced these terms with “Black English”. In the period between 1980 and 1991, it was called “African-American English”, and since 1991, it has been called “African-American Vernacular English” [Nikolaeva 2011, p. 3].

Some linguistic features of “African-American vernacular English” may present our point of view [Green 2002, p. 71]:

African-American Vernacular English	English	Explanation
Bogus	fake/fraudulent (saxta; firildaqçı)	deceit, fraud
hep, hip	well informed, up-to-date	to open one’s eyes, be aware of what is going on

**English + West African**

Cat	a friend, a fellow, etc.	A person
Cool	calm, controlled	Slow (literally cool)
Dig	to understand, appreciate, pay attention	To understand, appreciate
Bad	really good	To be good

Another interesting form of vocabulary items in African-American vernacular English is considered to be borrowings (that is, direct translations from English). In such cases, the idea is expressed by combining two words in some West African languages [8]. For example:

<b>Bad-eye</b>	<b>nasty look</b>	<b>hateful glance</b>
<b>Big-eye</b>	<b>Greedy</b>	<b>literally “big-eye”</b>

### ***Ebonics* as a term describing the language of the black people**

The word *ebonics* is a combination of the words “eboni – black” and “phoenix – sound” and is intended to describe the language of the black people of North America and West Africa of African origin. The purpose of creating the term was to emphasize that the language used by Africans is a separate and independent language. The first use of the word “Ebonics” was in a dialogue between E. Smith and psychologist R. Williams at a conference on “Cognitive and Language Development of Black Children” held in St. Louis in 1973. Two years after the conference, the term appeared in the title of a book written by R. Williams (*Ebonics: The True Language of Black Peoples*).

Human rights advocates advocate for Ebonics to be taught in American schools and legalized as an independent language. The events of December 18, 1996, which are a special page in the history of Ebonics, caused great resonance in the country. The Oakland School Board in California (a city particularly known for its tolerance) issued the Oakland Resolution, proposing to legalize the teaching of Ebonics, the native language of black children. The resolution stated: “Learning English is more difficult for black children” [Farrison 1970, p. 21]. The resolution caused a great political upheaval in the country: a storm of political debates and “cultural wars”, debates of the senates, numerous conferences of linguists and cultural scientists began. The reason for the objection to giving Ebonics status as a language of instruction in schools was very simple: children would not learn Standard American English, would not be able to pass tests, would not adapt to a society that spoke the literary norm, would remain an isolated society, and would not succeed in life. Proposals to legitimize Ebonics as an independent language have caused and continue to cause scandals not only nationally, but also internationally.

### **African American Vernacular English nowadays**

The ethnic differences in America stem from the social divisions between the main racial groups that played a major role in the settlement of the continent. Social conditions, including racial prejudice, social division and economic discrimination, have led to the continuous isolation of these groups from each other, and thus social differences have intensified and linguistic variability has emerged. At least two distinct ethnolects exist in most American cities today. The first is of European origin, and the other is of African origin. The most prominent and most stud-

ied social dialect associated with national identity in the United States is the “African American” dialect. African American Vernacular English is one of the dialects used by the African American population. Afro-American dialect is spoken in different parts of the world: USA (Hawaii, southern part of the country), Africa (Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon), West Indies, Guinea, Northern Australia, Jamaica, Great Britain, etc.). African-American vernacular English has gained popularity in the 21st century. The reason for this popularity was mainly the popularity of rap and “*r’n’b*” music among young and white audiences. The election of a black man, B. Obama, as the 44th president of the United States of America has further broadened the scope of interest in the study of African American English. An interesting point is that in American linguistics it has become customary to study the language repertoire of presidents, and a certain number of dissertations have been written about the language repertoire of each president. We think that this is a new view and contribution to American linguistics [Lavrukhin 1992, p. 6].

In conclusion, it is important to state that Ebonics or Afro-American English, whatever it is called, is a language or a dialect – Afro-American Vernacular English is a language variant that linguists consider “legitimate”. Like all dialects, it has fixed and consistent rules of correct or incorrect. As the dialect most studied by sociolinguists, it is studied and preserved as a cultural heritage not only in the United States, but all over the world.

### **Some features of African American English**

Although Africans use Afro-American Vernacular English in informal settings, they are forced to prefer the American variant of Standard English in formal contexts. African American Vernacular English and Standard African American English have many variations. Some use only one or two distinct grammatical features of African American English regularly. Other carriers of this dialect use only the prosodic features of Standard African American English – *intonation*, *volume*, *tempo*, *rhythm*, etc. or uses the vocabulary of African American English. Afro-American vernacular English is not currently considered a creole by creolists or non-creolists who specialize in the study of this field. However, as a semi-creole or its equivalent, it was later recorded as a partially reconstructed language [Holm 2000, p. 92].

African American Vernacular English is used by middle-class African Americans in everyday, formal, and informal settings as a type of sociocultural language complex, and African American Vernacular English varies somewhat by region or city. African

American Standard English is used in more formal or public settings than African American Vernacular English and is a more prestigious subdialect form of middle class African American dialect. This variety exhibits the vocabulary and grammar of Standard English, but retains certain elements of the unique African American vernacular English accent, which often has more phonologically preserved intonation or rhythmic features. Most middle-class African Americans typically learn Standard English in school, so older individuals often make linguistic switches between the two subdialects during a conversation.

Among the features of African-American vernacular English, it is noteworthy to mention that the “s” ending used for plural and possessive nouns is not observed in this dialect: *two boy; John house*. In general, it is possible to interpret the grammatical features in the speech of African Americans as follow-

ing: 1) the missing of the linking verbs such as instead of *He is tall – He tall; He is running – he running; He does not sing – he dont sing; He has been marrie for a long time – he bin married*, etc.

**Conclusion.** English is the language that is observed to be widely used in many countries. It is not only the native language of many people, but also official language in many places, countries. English has many dialets, variants which are going to be much used in many countries. The new variants of English such as African-American English, Chicano English or Mexican- American English, etc.

African-American English is mostly used variant of English by many people in some parts of the world. It is officially known as as Black English Vernacular or Vernacular Black English; it may also be called as Ebonics in informal discourse. It is the variant of English which has its own linguistics features.

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#### Мамедова Г. А. ЩОДО АФРО-АМЕРИКАНСЬКОГО ВАРІАНТУ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Питання варіантів англійської мови в останнє століття набуває все більшої актуальності в сучасній лінгвістиці. Спостереження показують, що зростання наукового інтересу до американізмів у 19 столітті призвело до дослідження та вивчення регіональних діалектів американського варіанту англійської мови у 20 столітті. Можна помітити, що вивчення діалектів, критеріїв їхнього поділу і, найголовніше, лінгвістичних особливостей є актуальними питаннями американської філології на сучасному етапі розвитку лінгвістичної науки в Сполучених Штатах Америки після Другої світової війни. Зі зростанням наукового інтересу до американізмів в 19 столітті, дослідження та вивчення регіональних діалектів стали більш популярними.

Соціальні діалекти, пов'язані з національною ідентичністю складають афроамериканський варіант англійської, мексиканський, південний, Нової Англії, Смокі Маунтінс, апалачський, тобто, в Америці сьогодні існують етнолекти.

Виявлено також можливість взаємовпливу між регіональними та соціальними діалектами американського варіанту англійської мови. Взаємовплив між регіональними та соціальними діалектами американського варіанту англійської мови охоплює пояснення наявних фонетичних, граматичних та лексичних подібностей та відмінностей між регіональними та соціальними діалектами. Дослідницьку роботу також можна вважати періоджерелом, яке слугує для збагачення практичних і теоретичних знань про лінгвістичні особливості діалектів американського варіанту англійської мови.

Результати, отримані в ході дослідження, є важливими для вивчення лінгвістичних особливостей американського варіанту англійської мови та його соціальних і регіональних діалектів.

Теоретичне значення дослідження, з його унікальним місцем у методології вивчення іношомовних діалектів, визначає нові ставлення та погляди на американський варіант англійської мови. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані в теоретичних розвідках, присвячених аналізу лінгвістичних та діалектологічних особливостей американського варіанту англійської мови.

Мета дослідження – описати процес історичного становлення афроамериканської англійської мови; дослідити лінгвістичні особливості афроамериканської англійської мови.

**Ключові слова:** англійська мова, варіанти, афроамериканська, лінгвістичний, історичний.