Canadian English: sociolinguistic and cultural aspects

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Abstract

The article aims to carry out an analysis of cultural and sociolinguistic peculiarities of Canadian English and to reveal their importance in the course of communication between people of different nationalities and cultures. The comparison of Canadian English with American and British variants is conducted in terms of historical, orthographical, lexical, phonetical, and morphologo-syntactical aspects. The authors of the article identify the existing peculiarities of Canadian English on the basis of aviation-related texts, which underlines the novelty of this research. The article points out that the features of the Canadian variant of the English language cover a wide range of phenomena: ways of expressing the concepts and content of linguistic units at the lexico-semantic level; morphological and syntactic features in the use of linguistic units, phraseological units. At the same time, there is a small amount of disagreement concerning grammar. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that, unlike lexicology, grammar is a stable branch of linguistics. After settling in Canada, residents faced a number of new phenomena that needed to be named, while the grammatical constructions they used at that time had already been established. However, there are certain grammatical features of the Canadian English variant, which give us reason to consider Canadian English to be an independent system.

Introduction

The English language is a universal means of communication for people of different countries and cultures. And it doesn't only affect other languages, but it undergoes various changes under the influence of different languages. Thus appeared the Canadian variant of the English language, which over time acquired its own characteristics, being influenced by all sorts of factors, both internal and external.

The relevance of the current scientific research can be proved by the fact that English is nowadays considered to be the language of international communication, and since recently there have been many opportunities to work abroad, including Canada, the need for a special linguistic consideration of all English language variants existing in the world is evident.

The purpose of this research is to study linguistic and stylistic features of the Canadian variant of the English language. The linguistic analysis is carried out on the basis of aviation-related texts written in Canadian English.

Research results

Initially, Indian tribes were the original population of Canada. The French explorers are believed to have been the first Europeans who occupied the Canadian territories and founded the settlement in 1600. The city of Quebec, which became the capital of "New France", was established in 1608. However, later the French colonialists were ousted by the British Empire.

Canadian English is primarily the result of four waves of immigration for almost two centuries. The first major and the most linguistically important wave was the influx of loyalists (adherents of the British Monarchy), mainly from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, who remained loyal to the British army during the War of Independence in North America, and after its defeat settled on free territories in Canada. In this regard, some scientists believe that Canadian English comes from the northern version of American English [Boberg, 2010].

After the War of 1812, there was a second wave of migration from Britain and Ireland. Canadian officials were afraid of anti-English bias among the population, and therefore supported this migration wave. Thus, due to the mixing of the two main immigration trends, many elements of different dialects of English penetrated into the Canadian language, which were spoken, on the one hand, by loyalists, mainly residents of the northern regions of the United States, and on the other hand, by immigrants from Great Britain.

The next stages of immigration from all over the world, which took place in 1910 and 1960, made a much smaller impact on the language and culture of Canada, but also contributed to the transformation of the country into a multicultural state [Considine, 2003].

In general, Canadian English combines the traditions of the British variant of English (mainly in spelling), as well as the American variant, which has had a significant impact on the vocabulary and phonetics of Canadian English [Avis, 1973]. To a lesser extent, English in Canada was influenced by other languages, among which French (the second official language of Canada), the language of native population and of assimilated immigrant groups.

According to the phonological system, Canadian and American English are classified together as North American English, emphasizing the fact that the vast majority of foreigners, even native English speakers, cannot distinguish the typical accents of the two countries.

When it comes to writing Canadians are used to mixing American and British ways of writing

words. For example: a Canadian would write "centre" meanwhile in the US a native speaker would write "center", though Canadians and Americans are the same at writing such words as "airplane", "organize", "realize", "tire".

As it is known, the American and British variants differ in spelling of such letter combinations as *-our/-or* at the end of words, respectively. As for the Canadian English, *-or* in terms of frequency is typical for periodicals, especially for newspapers, and the British version is more often used in academic, scientific and professional publications.

As for vocabulary, Canadian national English has its own peculiarities, as well as any other form of English. The enormous cluster of words was produced in Canada since a lot of different cultures and different people have lived there. The vocabulary will only be understood by native Canadians. Here are some examples: the word "fog-eater" is used for describing the rainbow. The phrase "salt fishing" is used to describe the process when fishers salt caught fish that they just hooked out of water. The word "caribou" describes a deer. Furthermore, there is the dictionary of Canadian terminology that specifies this version of English as the whole and depicts its features [Chambers, 2002].

In the 17th century, several verbs appeared among Canadisms, for example: to track, to shoot, to pitch, etc. Some Canadian adjectives may also be mentioned in this respect, such as rotten, staget, etc.

Consequently, the specific features of the Canadian variant of the English language are concentrated primarily at its lexico-semantic level. This aspect of the language system is the most sensitive to the changes in the society. Canadisms mainly refer to such thematic groups as: flora and fauna, clothing items, vehicles, geographical environment, cuisine, names of constructions.

Grammar norms mostly stick to the British standard, although the tendency of declining usage of Past Perfect Continuous and replacing it with Past Perfect takes place and this is the significant change of grammar [Ibidem].

In the Canadian version of English, either -t or -ed forms (learned/learned, burnt/burnt, spelt/spelled) can be used to form the past simple and perfect tenses (past tense/past participle). The usage of these words depends on personal preferences: verbal perfect form *dreamed* may sound rather strange to many people, while others will perceive it being false and offer the only analogue *dreamt*.

In British English, there is a tendency of omitting articles in front of official institutions, so, for example, a Briton would say: "Do not go to school", while an American would say: "Do not go to the hospital". Speaking about the Canadian variant, the article is also omitted.

In addition, the British variant of English retains the possessive form, for example, "barber's shop", while in the American variant two nouns in common form are employed to denote possessiveness: "barber shop". As for the Canadian variant, the use of two nouns is typical, as in the American version.

It is also worth noting that in British, American and Canadian variants there is a slight difference in the use of prepositions. In American English, the following trend may be observed: "Does not live on Wellington Street", in British English—"Does not live in Wellington Street". Other examples include: BrE "a quarter to eleven" (AmE "a quarter of"); BrE "sick at the stomach" (AmE "to the stomach"); BrE "he lives over at the Browns" (AmE "to the Browns"); BrE "the truck is behind the barn" (AmE "is back of the barn"). The Canadian variant coincides with the American one in this respect [Gregg, 1993].

The American usus also prevails in using Canadian abbreviated form *I won't* instead of American *I shan't*.

It should be noted that the use of auxiliary verbs has differences in all variants. In American English, the auxiliary verbs "do" and "have" are used to form questions, for example: "Do you have a pen?", while in British English the question will be formed in the following way: "Have you a pen?" In

Canadian English, it is possible to use both forms; however, what distinguishes the Canadian variant from the others is the use of the verb "got", for example, "Have you got a pen?"

Linguists have also traced the use of perfect forms in different national variants of Modern English, where the auxiliary verb *have* is often omitted. Structurally these forms often occur in simple narrative sentences, in compound and complex sentences with relative and object clauses and some circumstantial ones (such as of time, reason and condition).

Some linguists state that in Canadian English as in American one synthetic forms of conditional mood (Simple, Subjunctive) are more frequent. These forms significantly exceed the frequency of the analytical forms with auxiliaries *should*/*would*, while in British English the opposite variation is being observed. Synthetic forms prevail mostly over the analytical ones in newspaper, scientific styles and in fiction.

The usage of gerundial forms in the meaning of nouns plays an important role in Canadian English.

In this article the linguistic analysis of Canadian aviation texts was also conducted in order to identify their lexical and morphologo-syntactic features. The outcomes of the linguistic analysis are presented below.

"Canada *got* more than 20,000 Canadians served in the British air services during the First World War, and approximately 1,400 were killed during the war. The survivors came back to Canada and, like all veterans, sought to reconnect with loved ones and find jobs. Many of the Great War flyers mapped the North or delivered mail to remote communities as bush pilots. Billy Bishop, William Barker, and Donald MacLaren established their own flying companies…" [The Canadian encyclopedia, www].

Using this paragraph as an example, we should point to the grammatical norm of the Canadian variant. Instead of writing "I have got ", which is typical for British English, a simplified version of the predicative structure is used: the absence of the verb *have* in the subject-predicate structure.

One more example:

"The Eaton *Centre*, Toronto (designed by the Zeidler Partnership and Bregman and Hamann, phase 1 opening in 1977, phase 2 in 1979) is the epitome of those *vast multistorey* interior "atrium" spaces for which Canadian architecture became known internationally in the 1970s. The *centre* comprises The T" [Ibidem].

In the above-given passage, the lexical unit *vast* is used instead of the British/American units *huge/enormous*. In this example also the tendency to write the italicized words "centre" and "storey" in the British version is observed, as opposed to the American variant in which we find "center" and "story".

"When a bag cannot be matched to a passenger it *will be* removed before the aircraft takes off" [Ibidem].

Here we can see the use of *will* instead of *shall*, where in formal texts and documents a native speaker would most likely use the verb *shall*.

"Most *flying* in Canada is done under what is called Visual Flight Rules (VFR), in which the pilot navigates the aircraft by visual reference to the ground and is responsible for seeing and avoiding other aircraft. The ground controller issues radio instructions to all aircraft and service vehicles moving on or near the runways and the airport controller monitors (visually or on radar) all *landing*, *taking off* or *flying* within the airport control zone" [Ibidem].

In the following passage, the tendency of using gerundial forms as nouns is clearly evident.

It should be mentioned, that American texts are characterized by the use of the plural variant *aircrafts*, while in the British version this noun does not have a plural form and does not take the ending

-s. As it can be seen from the example above, the British version is used in this extract on aviation written in Canadian English.

Conclusion

Thus, the features of the Canadian variant of the English language cover a wide range of phenomena: ways of expressing the concepts and content of linguistic units at the lexico-semantic level; morphological and syntactic features in the use of linguistic units, phraseological units.

At the same time, it should be noted that there is a small amount of disagreement concerning grammar. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that, unlike lexicology, grammar is a stable branch of linguistics. After settling in Canada, residents faced a number of new phenomena that needed to be named, while the grammatical constructions they used at that time had already been established. However, there are certain grammatical features of the Canadian English variant, which give us reason to consider Canadian English to be an independent system. Changes in grammar occur in accordance with the process of evolution of the language itself.

The same differences (mainly grammatical) have also been revealed in Canadian aviation-related texts. The interpreter needs to know and operate with these features freely in his work in order to understand properly and translate correctly the specialized texts.

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Канадский вариант английского языка: культурный и социолингвистический аспекты

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Аннотация

В статье анализируются культурные и социолингвистические особенности канадского варианта английского языка. Выявляется их значимость в общении между людьми разных национальностей и культур. Проводится сравнение канадского варианта английского языка с американским и британским английским с точки зрения исторического, орфографического, лексического, фонетического и грамматического аспектов. Существующие отличительные свойства канадского английского выявляются на основе текстов авиационной тематики, что обусловливает новизну исследования. Указывается на то, что особенности канадского варианта английского языка охватывают широкий спектр явлений на морфологическом, лексико-семантическом и синтаксическом уровне. Делается вывод о том, что существуют определенные грамматические особенности канадского варианта английского языка, которые дают основание рассматривать канадский английский в качестве самостоятельной системы.

Ключевые слова

Культурные особенности, лингвистические особенности, стилистические особенности, коммуникация, канадский английский.

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