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English is a language full of varieties in grammar and vocabulary. There are more than a hundred dialects of the English language which are commonly divided into three large groups, such as the British Isles dialects, those of North America and those of Australia. Among numerous dialects of the United States African American English is one of our greatest interest and its distinct features as well as the role in the modern society have been analyzed.

According to the dictionary by Meriam-Webster, African American Vernacular English is a variety of American English spoken chiefly by African Americans. Vernacular refers to the first form of language that a person learns to speak, one that is used among family and friends [1]. African American Vernacular English is also known as African American English, Afro-American English, Afro-American, (American) Black English, Black English Vernacular or Ebonics. These are the most common terms in sociolinguistics for English used by majority of US citizens of Black African descend [2].

The dialect has its roots in the trans-Atlantic African slave trade. Some researchers emphasize its African origins, noting that West African languages often lack “th” sounds and final consonants clusters, and that replacing or simplifying these occurs both in Afro-American and West African English varieties spoken in Nigeria and Ghana. Others emphasize its English origins because of its vocabulary and the theory that much of its pronunciation and grammar could have come from the nonstandard dialects of English spoken by servants and other workers with whom African slaves interacted. There is also another group of linguists that is drawn to the similarities between African American English and Caribbean Creole English varieties. Even today linguists argue about its origin [1].

Describing the most typical features of this dialect it must be mentioned that it is widely known among speakers of other dialects for slang words, widely used in certain music genres, such as rap and internet

communication. As there is no established spelling system for Black English, depicting it in literature is instead often done through spelling changes to indicate its phonological features, or to contribute to the impression that it is being used [1].

Modern Afro-American English has its distinct phonological, grammatical and lexical features. Firstly, phonological features include: 1) non-rhotic (syllable-final /r/ is not pronounced): 'car' [ka:], 'party' [pa:ti]; 2) frequent deletion of final /l/, particularly after labials or word-finally with auxiliaries: 'help' [hep], 'he'll be home' [hi bi ho:m]; 3) reduction of word-final clusters: 'test' [tes], 'desk' [des], 'looked' [luk], 'talked' [tɔ:k]; 4) fortition (hardening) of initial /ð/ to either [d̥] (dental stop) or [d] (alveolar stop): 'this' [dis], 'there' [de:]; 5) in word-final position /θ/ is frequently shifted to [f], which can be also found for /ð/ (> [v]) in word-internal position: 'bath' [ba:f], 'teeth' [ti:f], 'brother' [brʌvə]; 6) velar nasal shifted to alveolar point of articulation: 'She's comin' tomorrow'; 7) the distinction between short /ɛ/ and /ɪ/ is frequently lost before nasals, the neutralisation is to the raised vowel [ɪ]: 'pen', 'pin' [pɪn]; 'ten', 'tin' [tɪn]; 8) glide reduction applies to both /ai/ and /au/ with the slight retraction of the onset of the second diphthong maintaining the distinction between the two phonemes: 'wife' [wa:f], 'time' [ta:m], 'house' [ha:s], 'loud' [la:d]; 9) strong initial stress is often found with words of two syllables: 'police' [po:lis], 'define' [di:fain]; 10) metathesis, which involves switching around sounds within words 'ask' – 'aks', 'library' – 'libary' [3].

But some of these features are also common for other dialects. For instance, the /θ/ is frequently shifted to [f] in Cockney English. The loss of distinction between /ɛ/ and /ɪ/ before nasals, as well as glide reduction are typical for southern white American English. The shift of velar nasal to alveolar point of articulation is very common in dialects of English [3].

Secondly, the Scottish linguist T. McArthur distinguishes eleven rules in African American English grammar. Among them are multiple negations ('*She don't want nothing.* '); inflected forms such as plural, possessive, and singular –s and past –ed are variably omitted; inversion occurring within questions ('*What it is? What you are?* '); auxiliary "do" can replace "be" in negative statement; intention is sometimes expressed by the particle "a" ('*I'm a drive to town.* '); adverbial use of "like to" meaning almost ('*She like to fell out the window.* ') [1].

Besides, the American sociolinguist J. Sidnell adds some peculiarities of the verb "be" usage which can be omitted because of a variety of factors: 1) in future sentences with "gonna" or "gon"; 2) before verbs with the –ing or –in ending; 3) before adjectives and expressions of location; 4) before nouns or phrases with nouns [1].

Finally, Black English does not have a vocabulary separate from other varieties of English. However, it has some specific words and the use of some English words differs from the standard dialect. Scientists also note different origins of those words. For example, several terms trace their history to West Africa: 'bogus' (deceit, fraud), 'hep', 'hip' (well informed, up-to-date), 'goober' (peanut), 'yam' (sweet potato), 'tote' (to carry). Some words have English form but West African meaning: 'cat' (a friend, a fellow; suffix –kat denoting person), 'cool' (calm, controlled), 'bad' (really good). Many recent innovations in its vocabulary tend to spread rapidly to other varieties of English. For example: 'finna' (about to), 'wildin' or 'whilin' (to say or do something crazy), 'GOAT' (acronym for "Greatest of All Time", typically used to describe an icon). American linguist M. G. Lee notes how black speech and verbal expressions have often been found crossing over into mainstream prestige speech, such as in the news [3].

The public relations to this dialect are still not defined. Many people used to and continue to see this variety as a wrong way to speak English even though linguists maintain that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it as a variety. A recent corpus study that looked at lexical innovation in social media found that African American users had a strong cultural impact on how the language changes, starting from small but influential hubs and rapidly moving across the country before eventually appearing in mainstream use. Non-specialist attitudes towards African American Vernacular English can be negative, as it both deviates from the standard and its use is interpreted as a sign of ignorance or laziness. Because of this negative attitude, most speakers of Black English are bidialectal, being able to use it as well as Standard American English. Such linguistic adaptation in different environments is called code-switching [2].

Thus, there is a multitude of ways to speak the English language. As a result of our research it appeared that Black English has a huge impact on the English language. It has contributed a lot to American cultural life, both past and present, which is a sign of a strong linguistic culture, tradition and community. It shows that linguistic innovations can be widely distributed and end up having such an outsize impact

on the standard language which makes Afro-American English one of the richest sources of lexical innovation in English. Like all other dialects of English, with their own history of how they came to be, African American English is a systematic and complete language that operates under a set of rules.

#### **СПИСОК ИСПОЛЬЗОВАННЫХ ИСТОЧНИКОВ**

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