

Features of African-American English in Kathryn Stockett's novel 'The help'

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The problem of segregation and racism in the USA was always popular in English culture and found reflection in books and on television. For recent 20 years Hollywood created a great amount of projects which show lifestyle of people of color in America: book adaptations (The Help, 12 Years a Slave), original scripts, movies based on real events (Green Book, BlacKkKlansman, I am the Night). Mostly they were aimed to show the problem of racism in 20th century. The life of people of color is depicted not only in their environment, places they live, but also through their language. African-American English is a big linguistic phenomenon. Some linguists consider Black English as an independent part of American English which has its own phonetics, grammar and vocabulary, and provides all communicative needs of African Americans[2].

The problem of this study is relevant because due to globalization elements of African-American English came into other cultures and the interest in Black English has increased we can observe elements of this dialect in music and movies.

We would like to speak about features of African-American English in Kathryn Stockett's historical fiction novel "The Help". The choice of the book can be explained in following factors: the story takes place in 1960th, interaction between people of color and white people show the differences in their social statuses and, what is more important, in the way they speak. The novel has 1st person narration and 2 of 3 main characters are people of color which gives us a great amount of material for analysis.

The novation of this research can be explained in the fact that we not only observe the features of the dialect but also study the way these features can be transcribed graphically and used as stylistic device. The object is African-American English. The aim of the study is to show how authors can depict peculiarities of Afro-American English by means of graphon and grammatical constructions inherent in Black English. We analyzed 90 sentences and phrases from the novel to establish main features of the dialect in the speech of characters.

African-American English also can be called Ebonics (from 'ebony'-black and 'phonics'-acoustic), means any various forms of English spoken by black people, especially a form is spoken in US cities and has its own grammatical, lexical, and phonetic features.

By means of graphon Kathryn Stockett shows peculiar pronunciation. In some prepositions and pronoun 'them' front sounds are omitted. 'Them'- is shortened to 'em (*I'm on ask em again*). Prepositions 'before' and 'about' are transmitted by 'fore' and 'bout' (*Do it fore I can tell her no*). Pronunciation of preposition 'of' and particle 'to' is shown with help of letter 'a' (*We want a do all kind a stories*).

In speech short forms of phrases are used. In the text we may observe: 'Lemme'- short for 'let me', 'y'all'- shortened version of 'you all' (*White people lemme know where y'all need to get to*).

Speaking about grammatical deviations from Standard English we would like to mention classification of I. V. Plotnikov who divided peculiarities of Black English grammar into 4 categories: features connected with word order; features connected with excessive use of grammatical

units; features connected with loss of grammatical units; features connected with substitution of grammatical units [1].

1. Features connected with word order. Here we can observe that the subject in tag questions and declarative sentences stands in the second position. This feature may be connected with loss of auxiliary verb in the phrase.

Oh, like you Miss Patterson, ain't you?

2. Features connected with excessive use of grammatical units. This category includes the usage of extra affixes (e.g., plural suffix -s with uncountable nouns) or usage of 'no' to form double negotiation which is often observed in Ebonics.

Cause she don't eat no eggs.

There wasn't no other news going on.

3. Features connected with loss of grammatical units. In speech African Americans can skip auxiliary verbs. Usually, verbs to be and to have in present perfect, present perfect-continuous and past perfect are omitted.

Miss Skeeter a member a the club, wouldn't be no trouble inviting her.

You a smart girl. You a kind girl.

I only been cooking.

4. Features connected with substitution of grammatical units. This category is the largest and it consists in frequent usage of verb be in form of bare infinitive instead of other auxiliary verbs. The negation is formed with construction 'ain't' which replaces am not, are not, is not, have/has not, do not. In most cases 'ain't' is combined with 'no' 'not' or negative pronoun and forms double negation. Also, African Americans rarely use verbs in the 3rd person and say 'she or he do' instead of *does*.

Miss Hilly don't treat with no respect .

She ain't happy.

Ida ain't got no backyard.

Her and Mister Leefolt's room in the back be a fair size but baby Girl's room be tiny.

All these features help the author to create the atmosphere of American South in 1960th, it reflects the poverty and lack of education black people struggled with. The distinction between well-spoken, rich, sometimes arrogant masters and the poor obedient help demonstrates a gap between two social classes. Representation of life of African-Americans is impossible without representation of their speech. Ebony English has a big historical and cultural background which makes it the interesting object for studying not only for linguists but also for everyone else.

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