

FÜGGELÉK

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH FOLK SPEECH

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The aim of this short article is to sum up those characteristic features of English folk speech that seem to be universal in the English-speaking countries and are also reflected in literature.

Many of these features are considered ungrammatical. This is especially the case with the use of the 3rd person singular of the verb after a plural subject or after the 1st and 2nd person pronouns *I* and *you*.

In reality, the language has a tendency to generalize one form of the present in all persons, i. e., it is constantly changing. What is ungrammatical today may become the rule tomorrow as the history of English amply proves it.

On the other hand folk speech often preserves old, obsolete words, old meanings of modern words, and old phraseological or syntactical constructions. They go by the name of archaisms.

In this way folk speech points both to the future and to the past. Therefore it is of great interest to the linguist.

Folk speech is often used by eminent writers when they try to reflect truly the speech of simple people. Among those who have best succeeded at it are Mark Twain and R. L. Stevenson. To use this stylistic means requires great tact and a deep knowledge of the ways of expression of the people.

The author of this article has chosen this theme just because it carries linguistic as well as stylistic interest.

Our list of grammatical features may be incomplete but it records the most conspicuous items at least.

For each type of construction only one or two examples will be given but if a type is very frequent, the remark „Numerous examples” will be added.

The sources of our material are:

- (i) English Fairy Tales
collected by Joseph Jacobs, editor of „Folk-Lore”
London, David Nutt, 270—271 Strand
1892
- (ii) R. L. Stevenson: Treasure Island
Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1956
- (iii) Mark Twain: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.
The list of the features of English folk speech is given here:
 1. Use of the personal pronoun after the verb in the imperative.
 2. Use of the composite demonstrative adjectives *this here*, *that there*, etc. instead of the simple demonstrative adjectives *this*, *that*, etc.

3. Repetition of the subject with a pronoun within the same sentence.
 4. Frequent putting of the (preposition-)adverbs before the pronoun subject.
 5. Wrong tense forms and confusion of the infinitive, past tense, and past participle of the strong verbs.
 6. Double or superfluous negation.
 7. Use of the 3rd person singular of the verb instead of other persons, no matter whether singular or plural.
 8. Generalization of *don't* for all persons (including the 3rd person singular).
 9. Double or wrong formation of the comparative and superlative of adjectives.
 10. Coincidence of the form of the adverb with the form of the adjective.
 11. Dialectal forms of Standard English words.
 12. Dialectal senses of Standard English words.
 13. Dialectal words not found in Standard English.
 14. Archaisms.
 15. Frequent use of the historical present, especially with the verb expressing narration or reporting, such as *say*, *answer*, etc.
 16. Repetition of the subject and the verbal predicate with inverted word order.
 17. Other kinds of tautology.
 18. Frequent use of the absolute nominative participial construction.
 19. Omission of the definite article.
 20. The personal pronoun *them* used in the role of the demonstrative adjective *those*.
 21. Emphatic or intensive use of *but*.
 22. Omission of the relative pronoun *who* as subject of an adjective clause (attributive clause).
 23. Metaphors and expressions not in general use in Standard English.
 24. Repetition of the same word with intensifying effect.
 25. Postpositive use of certain prepositions.
 26. Plural verb with a singular subject: *It were* (rarer than 7).
- Furthermore in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* we find the following characteristics not to be encountered in the other sources mentioned:
27. Double past.
 28. Repetition of the object with a pronoun within the same sentence.
 29. Lack of the predicate verb in the sentence.

Let us now see some examples in the same order.

1. Use of the personal pronoun after the verb in the imperative:

Put *you* them there pies on the shelf. (i)

Go *you*, and get one o'them there pies. (i)

Look *you* here, I want a wife, and I'll marry your daughter. (i)

„Never *you* mind,” that said, „but tell me what you're a-crying for.” (i)

(Numerous examples.)

It should be born in mind that in the Standard language the unceremonial imperative is: *go*; the polite imperative is *go please* or *please go*; and the rude imperative *you go*. Note that in folk speech the word order is inverted and there is no connotation of rudeness as is best illustrated by the example *Look you here*.

The personal pronoun appears also after intensive „do”: So tomorrow do you all come in front of my house with your money in your aprons. (i)

2. Use of the composite demonstrative adjectives *this here*, *that there* instead of the simple demonstrative adjectives *this*, *that* etc. See the examples given in 1.

(Numerous examples.)

3. Repetition of the subject with a pronoun within the same sentence:

But *the girl*, *she* says to herself: „...” (Suffolk dialect, i.) *Tom he* made a sign to me. (iii.)

The young *Molly she* sings out: ...

(ii. Numerous examples.)

4. Frequent putting of the (preposition-)adverbs before the pronoun-subject.

So *back she* come and says she: „...” (i.)

... and *away she* went to the dance. (i.)

Off she slipped and *home she* went. (i.)

(Numerous examples.)

She slipped off would be an unemotional, matter-of-fact statement while *Off she slipped* says more than that; it is more emphatic first of all and may imply that the action was done cleverly or quickly and that there is some kind of emotion on our part such as admiration, surprise, or interest.

In imperative sentences the device of putting the adverb before the pronoun-subject is simply used to add emphasis to the command: *Away you run to the shop! Up you go!* (From the film „Springtime in the Sierra.” The command was given to a tame bird to hop from its master’s arm onto the bough of a tree.)

5. Wrong tense forms and confusion of the infinitive, past tense, and past participle of the strong verbs:

I’ve *ate* ’em all. (Suffolk dialect, i.)

I *knowed* that well enough. (iii.)

He *catched* me. (iii.)

Brunge, past tense for „brought”. (iii.)

Throwed, past tense for „threw”. (iii.)

My nose *begun* to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. (iii.)
(Past participle for past tense.)

So Tom got out a sheet of paper that he had *wrote* the oath on, and read it. (Past tense for past participle.) (iii.)

(Numerous examples.)

6. Double or superfluous negation:

That *won’t* do *no* harm, if that *don’t* do no good. (i.)

... till you *couldn’t* *hardly* see it. (i.)

It is not so, *nor* it was *not* so. (= nor was it so) (i.)

(Numerous examples.)

It is of some interest to point out here that in Old English the negation was either simple or double:

Witodlice *ne* eart þu laest on Juda ealdrum. 'You are certainly not the least (important) among the princes of Juda.'

Naefre we aer þullic *ne* gesawon. 'We never saw anything like this before.'

Paet hus *na ne* feoll. 'The house did not fall.'

Nan ne dorste *nan* þing ascian. 'No one durst ask anything.'

Modern popular American goes as far as to use three negative words in a sentence like: You *don't never* know *nothing* (= You never know anything).

7. Use of the 3rd person singular of the verb instead of other persons, no matter whether singular or plural:

„Well,” *says* they, „there's a dance again this evening.” (i.)

Well, next day they *says* to her, „. . .” (i.)

Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire. (iii.)

The stars over us *was* sparkling ever so fine. (iii.)

No, *says* I to myself. (iii.)

(Numerous examples.)

The s-inflection of the 3rd person singular is a peculiar distinctive mark of the present tense. Perhaps this is why it tends to become the general form of the present.

8. Generalization of *don't* for all persons:

She'll have to spin five skeins every day, and if she *don't* I shall kill her. (i.)

The most plausible explanation for the discarding of the form *doesn't*, in opposition to what has been stated in paragraph 7, is that the combination *don't* is now more and more felt as a negative adverb like *not* or *no*.

9. Double or wrong formation of the comparative and the superlative of adjectives:

„Oh dear”, he says, „I do think trousers are the *most awkwardest* kind of clothes that ever were. (i.)

the beautifullest (i.)

ignorantest, carelessst, foolishst, threacherousest, best-naturedest, the most thrillingest one, innocentest. (iii.)

10. Coincidence of the form of the adverb with that of the adjective:

At last her ill-usage of him was told to Alice, Mr. Fitzwarren's daughter, who told the cook she should be turned away if she did not treat him *kinder*. (i.)

I'll tan you *good* (= well) (iii.). Just then Jim begun to breathe *heavy*. (iii.) This is especially common in America.

And if they didn't live *happy* for ever after, that's nothing to do with you or me. (i.)

11(a). Dialectal forms of Standard English words:

darter (Suffolk dialect) = daughter

noo (Suffolk dialect) = no

ain't = haven't

sate = sat

like as = as (= ahogyan)

lookye = look you

ha' = have

kine = cows

crew = crowed (past tense) (i.)

for that = for (because)

(b). Dialectal syntactical constructions (prepositions, governments, etc.):

What are you a-doing of? = What are you doing?

to catch a sight of = to catch sight of

She *sat herself* down = She sat down

She sat her (herself) down aside of the daughter.

12. Dialectal senses of Standard English words:

When they (= the pies) came out of the oven, they were *that* (= so) overbaked the crusts were too hard to eat. So the woman says to her daughter: „Darter,” says she, „put you them there pies on the shelf and leave 'em there a little, and they'll *come* again.” — She meant, you know, the crust would get soft. (Suffolk dialect.) (i.)

She *offed with* her cap. = She took off her cap.

She was *rare* (= very) angry.

rarely = very, extremely

weird v. t. = destine

borrow v. t. = restore (to original form), redeem

She cast Princess Margaret under her spell. And this was her spell:

I weird ye to be a Laidly (= loathsom) Worm (= dragon)

And borrowed (= restored) shall ye never be,

Until Childe Wynd, the King's own son

Come to the Heugh and thrice kiss thee.

Until the world comes to an end,

Borrowed shall ye never be,

But if ye would (= wish) that she be *borrowed* to her natural shape, ...

(All from i.)

13. Dialectal words not found in Standard English:

bogle = „spectre”, related to „bogy, bogey, bugaboo, bugbear”,

perhaps from the Welsh *bwg* „ghost, goblin”. Compare the Russian *bog* „god”;

bairn = „child” (related to Scandinavian *barn*)

widershins, probably analogous to the German „wider Schein”,

against the appearance of the sun, „counterclockwise” as the mathematicians say — i. e., W., S., E., N., instead of with the sun and the hands of a clock. (All from i.)

14. Archaisms:

He was *sore* (= very much) frightened.

ye — you

spake — spoke (past tense).

„Where's the flax?” says he,

„Here it *be* (= is)”, says she.

She began *a-crying* (= she began to cry.)

malison = curse (All from i.)

15. Frequent use of the historical present, especially with verbs expressing narration or reporting such as *say, tell, answer*, etc.:

Well, he hadn't eaten but a mouthful or so, when he *stops* and *begins* to laugh. (i.)

(Numerous examples.)

16. Repetition of the subject and the verbal predicate with inverted word order:

In he came, and when he sees the five skeins, he says, *says he*. (i.)

(Numerous examples.)

17. Other kinds of tautology:

And I heard *a kind of a sort of a* humming (i.)

18. Frequent use of the absolute nominative participial construction:

And there they three sat a crying side by side, and *the beer running* all over the floor. (i.)

19. Omission of the definite article:

The gentleman asked what was the matter. „Why,” they say, „matter enough! Moon's tumbled into the pond. (i.)

Cat! Cat! kill_rat;_rat won't gnaw_ropes; ropes won't hang butcher; butcher won't kill ox; ox won't drink water; water won't quench fire... (i.)

20. The personal pronoun *them* is used in the role of the demonstrative adjective *those*:

So there was a whole lot of sillies bigger than *them* three sillies at home. (i.)

(Numerous examples)

21. Emphatic or intensive use of *but*:

„How much do you love me, my dear?” — „Why,” says she, „better nor all the world.” — „That's good,” says he. So he says to the third. „How much do you love me, my dear?” — „Why, I love you as fresh meat loves salt,” says she. Well, *but* he was angry. „You don't love me at all,” says he, „and in my house you stay no more.” (i.)

22. Omission of the relative pronoun *who* as subject of an adjective clause (attributive clause):

Once upon a time there was a man and a wife *had* too many children. (i.)

23. Metaphors and expressions not in general use in Standard English:

But the Baron was in a *tower of a* (= great) temper. (i.)

24. Repetition of the same word with intensifying effect:

The stepmother was angry as angry (= very angry). (i.)

That very evening they heard something *tap tapping* at the door. (i.)

25. Postpositive use of certain prepositions:

Open, open, green hill, and let the young prince in with his horse and his hound,” and Kate added, „and his lady him *behind*”. (i.)

26. Plural verb with a singular subject:

It were. (ii.)

In Huckleberry Finn the following additional features are encountered:

27. Double past:

I *couldn't stood* it no longer.

... how much better off they *used to was*.

28. Repetition of the object with a pronoun:

He warn't only just a farmer, he was a preacher, too, and had a little one-horse log church down the back of the plantation, which he built it himself at his own expense.

29. Lack of the predicate verb:

Then I out with my saw, and went to work on that log again.

From the above examples we can see that many forms considered incorrect in the literary language are current in folk speech. It is also clear that most of these features are present both in popular British and in popular American. There are, however, differences of frequency. Double and triple negations for instance are more frequent and have a wider social spread in America than in Britain.

These popular features are partly interesting survivals, partly dark horses of the future (items 7, 8, 10 and 20.).

Of course, we might have quoted many more examples and referred to many more sources, both written and spoken, but the sources cited are representative of all and quite sufficient for our material.

The importance of these phenomena is proved by the fact that Englishmen with an average or even more than average education admit that with a foreigner they speak „correct English” but with one another „incorrect English”. Does that not imply that „correct” English is no longer natural English while „incorrect” English is natural? And how long can the „standard” language hold its own against the „natural”? Evidently no standard can remain unchanged, for change is the life of language.

AZ ANGOL NÉPNYELV JELLEMZŐ VONÁSAI

DR. MATZRÓ LÁSZLÓ

A jelen cikk az angol népnyelv legjellegzetesebb sajátosságainak rövid összegezését adja. A népi formákat három könyvből idézzük, melyek forrásként szolgáltak.

A népi formák rövid értékelését is adjuk. Megállapítjuk, hogy 27.—29. kivételével ezek a vonások mind Anglia, mind Amerika népnyelvében megtalálhatók.

Предлагаемая статья дает краткую сводку самых характерных черт английского народного языка. Народные формы приведены из трех книг которые послужили источниками. Дается также краткая оценка народных форм.

Устанавливается что за исключением 27.—29. эти черты встречаются в народном языке и Англии и Америки.

Hans Kurath and Raven I. McDavid, Jr.: *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States.* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1961.)

From the jacket: „Hans Kurath, professor of English at the University of Michigan, has been director of the Linguistic Atlas of the U. S. A. since 1930. He is also editor of the Middle English Dictionary, and a former president of the Linguistic Society of America.

Raven I. McDavid, Jr., is associate professor of English at the University of Chicago. One of the chief field investigators for this book, he is associate director of the Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States and is now at work on a new edition of Mencken's *The American Language*.”

We are publishing here this review because this book may serve as a model for the treatment of dialectal and social differences of pronunciation.

The method of investigation used by the authors can be of great interest to all those who study either the various types of English or dialectal, regional, and social differences of any other language including the vernacular. The study of this book is the more recommendable in our country because there is no similarly comprehensive work on Hungarian folk speech and cultivated speech. Also, Hungarian works of this kind are based on the phonemic rather than the phonic interpretation of the language, whereas in the book under discussion these two aspects are coordinated and correlated.

Two main points have been kept in view: (1) historical development, (2) regional and social dissemination.

As to the first, it has served chiefly as a basis for the selection of words to be represented on the maps. Historical references are also inserted in the text. We find for instance on p. 112 the history of the New England „short” *o* and its ingliding diphthongal variant, a mid-back-round vowel, explained through the development of Middle English long open *o* in various English dialects. It is pointed out by the authors that a similar development into ingliding diphthongs has taken place in many English dialects south of Yorkshire where such words as *road*, *stone* now have the vowel phones [uə, uə]. The comparative maps of England serve to suggest possible historical or developmental connections.

In regard to dissemination, folk speech is taken into consideration first of all, the speech of the cultured being a basis for comparison, except in cases where the pronunciation of the cultured shows considerable regional variation. The whole chapter (Chapter 2) is devoted to the various types of cultivated speech.

Speakers from all social levels, the highly cultured, the middle group, and the folk, have been interviewed and so the authors' collections „provide data for cultivated speech, common speech, and folk speech, and point up the existence or absence of social differences in usage. Social dissemination, taken together with the regional dissemination of variants, often leads to fairly safe inferences concerning trends in usage.”

The list of cultured speakers interviewed contains their essential data, such as sex, age, education, tempo of speech, social status, profession, population figure of the place they live in, and such descriptions as „Horrorified by folk speech,” „Poised and natural,” „Perhaps somewhat affected,” „Can quote folk forms,” „Speech typical of the older generation,” „Remembers the rural speech of her childhood,” „Sure of her own speech,” etc.

Such characterizations, though seemingly rather subjective, are of great importance because they reflect the lesser or greater degree of consciousness, the more or less critical attitude of the informant to the type of speech used by himself or by others, showing also to what degree he is influenced by local speech or the standard of a certain community. We can see in Chapter 2 how far the regional dialects influence cultivated speech.

The origin of the inhabitants of the various areas is also pointed out. This often throws light on certain pronunciation features. Thus many New England pronunciation features occur farther west in Upstate New York as a result of New England settlements. Eastern Pennsylvanian monophthongal /e/, /o/ can be ascribed to German settlers in that area. For the /u/ vowel of *drought* in Western Pennsylvania Ulster Scots are responsible.

Nearly all the American variants, however, have their roots in England, as is shown throughout the book, foreign influence being, with few-and-far-between exceptions, negligible.

Chapter 1 contains a diagram of American vowel sounds. This chapter deals in some detail with the problems of the phonemic system and its application. The speech types comprised in this study are divided into four groups, Standard British English being added for the sake of comparison. In this chapter the reader is warned against the mistake of trying to interpret inconsistencies of speech as parts of a system. No particular instance of this is given in the same chapter, but we might quote the inconsistencies in the pronunciation of *a* in the sequence *wa* as reflected in the words *water* and *wash* on p. 163 and the corresponding maps. On this page a few of the most frequent *wa*-words are shown for the illustration of the fact that „the regional incidence of /ɔ/ and /a/ after /w/ varies from word to word”. A further interesting fact in this connection is that „there seems to be no marked social cleavage anywhere”. The examples are compiled in a table. Of course, in a standardized, consequently systematized speechway all these words should have either the /ɔ/ or the /a/ phoneme. According to our own observations, vowels with higher tongue movements are more usual before /n/, as in *want*, than in other positions, as for instance before /t/ (in *what* or /ʃ/ in *wash*. Similarly inconsequent is the use of /hw/ or /w/ in words with initial wh- as in *wheelbarrow*, *whinny*, *whip*, *wharf* (Maps 174—175).

Chapter 2 is devoted to the regional dialects of cultivated speech. Synopses are referred to in connection with each dialect discussed in this chapter. An appendix at the end of the chapter gives the list of the 157 cultured informants. The number of all speakers interviewed is about 1500. Then follow synopses, 70 in number, of the pronunciation types of several localities with key words. The pronunciations of these key words are represented by the help of a finely graded phonetical transcription system. The regional divisions for cultivated speech are:

1. Eastern New England
2. Lower Connecticut Valley
3. Metropolitan New York
4. Upstate New York and Western New England
5. Pennsylvania (E. Pa., W. Pa.)
6. South Midland
7. Upper South
8. Lower South.

For the treatment of the material of the whole book, however, a more detailed division is used. This includes 18 speech areas (Map 2):

The North

1. Northeastern New England
2. Southeastern New England
3. Southwestern New England
4. Upstate New York and w. Vermont
5. The Hudson Valley
6. Metropolitan New York

The Midland

7. The Delaware Valley (Philadelphia Area)

8. The Susquehanna Valley
 9. The Upper Potomac and Shenandoah Valleys
 10. The Upper Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh Area)
 11. Northern West Virginia
 12. Southern West Virginia
 13. Western North and South Carolina
- The South*
14. Delmarvia (Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, and southern Delaware)
 15. The Virginia Piedmont
 16. Northeastern North Carolina (Albermarle Sound and Neuse Valley)
 17. The Cape Fear and Pee Dee Valleys
 18. South Carolina.

Chapter 3 treats of the regional and social dissemination of the diaphones of stressed vowels. The diaphones are studied in key words. Each diaphone group is provided with a reference to the corresponding map. The diphthongs, as the most variable sounds, are treated with the greatest care. They are classified as upgliding, downgliding, ingliding (tending toward a central position), backgliding, fast or slow. They are given particular attention throughout the whole book, and rightly so, for they, or their monophthongal substitutes, are often the most characteristic marks of this or that regional (p. 109) or social (pp. 103, 113) speech type.

Chapter 4 deals with the consonant /r/ and the vowels before /r ~ /r/. The correspondance between the phonic data and the phonemic interpretation is shown in two tables.

Chapter 5 describes the regional and social differences in the incidence of vowels and consonants. The incidence of these vowels and consonants is illustrated in carefully selected words. They are mainly words „in which different phonemes occur in more or less clearly marked regional and/or social dissemination. Some of the words chosen are representative of a group of words that had the same vowel in earlier English; others illustrate divergent dissemination of the variants derived from one and the same source; yet others are isolated instances.” . . . „Most items are accompanied by one or more maps on which selected variants — usually the less common ones — are shown in full detail. If cultivated speech varies regionally, a small-scale insert exhibiting the usage of the cultured informants is included.”

Wherever it seems desirable to point out connections with British English, a map of England is added for the sake of comparison. English folk speech variants are consistently compared with the American forms and conclusions drawn concerning the probable or possible origin of the latter, without undue speculation however, as in the case of *sausage* and *because*, where the American folk speech variants /'saestdʒ/ and /bɪ'keɪz/ have no counterpart in England. The maps showing British usage are based on the investigations made in 1937–38 by the late Dr. Guy S. Lowman, Jr. Occasionally his data are supplemented from Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1898–1905) and his *Dialect Grammar* (1905), London: Henry Frowde.

This chapter is followed by an index of illustrative words and 180 maps. The book is a companion volume to Kurath's *Word Geography of the*

Eastern U. S. (1949) and Atwood's *Survey of Verb Forms in the Eastern U. S.* (1954), (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press).

It is No. 3 of the series *Studies in American English*. In its scope, method, and thoroughness it is one of the greatest works in its kind. We can recommend it to students of American English as a unique source of information covering a large portion of the U. S. and to all linguists interested in the study of social and regional differences of any other language.

DR. LÁSZLÓ MATZKÓ

THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH IN THE ATLANTIC STATES

By

HANS KURATH and RAVEN I. McDAVID, Jr.

Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 1961

A fent ismertetett könyv igen értékes és gazdag forrás az amerikai angol nyelv tanulmányozói számára, de módszere miatt más nyelvészek figyelmét is megérdemli. A kiejtésbeli eltéréseket nemcsak területek szerint, hanem a beszélők társadalmi helyzete vagy műveltségi szintje szerint is tanulmányozza. Az anyag gyűjtésénél magas műveltségűeket, közepes műveltségűeket és az egyszerű nép képviselőit kérdezték meg. A szövegen kívül a könyv 180 térképet is tartalmaz. Igen tartalmas, átfogó, módszeres és rendszeres munka az angol kiejtésről az U. S. A. atlanti államaiban.

DR. MATZKÓ LÁSZLÓ

Вышеназванная книга представляет собой ценнейший и богатейший источник для изучающих американский язык, но из-за ее метода заслуживает и внимание других лингвистов. Произносительные расхождения изучаются в ней не только по областям, а также по общественной позиции или образовательному уровню говорящих. При собирании материала были интервьюированы высоко образованные, средне образованные и представители простого народа. Кроме текста книга содержит и 180 карт. Это очень содержательный, обширный, методический и систематический труд о произношении английского языка в атлантических штатах США.

Др. Ласло Матзко