

**LINGUISTIC MEANS OF EXPRESSING REGIONAL IDENTITY OF THE
SPEAKER IN COMPLIMENTS
(ON THE MATERIAL OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING LINGUACULTURES)**

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this article is to examine the influence of regional identity of the representatives of English-speaking linguacultures on the process of producing compliments. In fact, the speaker using this or that dialect conveys the information to the listener about a group of people he or she belongs to: using the dialect of surrounding people means to show your solidarity with a group of these people and demonstrate your opposition to some other group of people. The research has revealed that regional identity of the speaker manifests itself in his language behaviour in general and in producing compliments in particular.*

KEYWORDS: Compliments, British regional identity, American regional identity, Urban-related identity, Settlement identity.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the many studies using the concept of regional identity, few have provided a clear and theoretically driven account of the manifestation of the speaker's regional identity in the language. This research is focused on the theory of regional identity and is aimed to study the way the place people live in influences the structure of complimentary utterances in the British and American linguacultures. The characteristic features of compliments of people living in the city (the representatives of urban-related identity) and those living in the suburbs (the representatives of rural-related, or settlement identity) are examined.

The proponents of the theory of regional identity claim that place can be considered to be a social category within social identity theory (Twigger-Ross, Clare L. and Uzzell, David L., 1996, p. 206). There are two ways in which place has been related to identity. Firstly, place identifications refer to a person's expressed identification with a place. Place identification would express membership of a group of people who are defined by location. In this sense, place identification is a type of social identification. Secondly, we would argue that identity of a place has place-related implications as we agree with H.M. Proshansky who proposes that identity of a place is another aspect of identity comparable to social identity that describes the person's socialization with the physical world (Twigger-Ross, Clare L. and Uzzell, David L., 1996, p. 205-206).

It should be noted that people use place identifications to distinguish themselves from the other people. Therefore, the main function of a place is similar to a social category. Correspondingly, place identifications are comparable to social identifications (Twigger-Ross, Clare L. and

Uzzell, David L., 1996, p. 207). People who have the same specific values and are unified by one living territory (place) have equal regional identity.

A. Paasi acknowledges that regional identity is defined as the extent to which people identify themselves with the region as the whole of institutionalized practices, discourses and symbols (Messely, L., Dessein, J, Lauwers, L., 2010, p. 20).

Consequently, it is relevant to consider regional identity as one of the components of social identity which testifies to the identification with a group of people belonging to a certain place. If this position is taken we should admit that regional identity manifests itself in the language we speak. This exemplifies the tendency to use a certain dialect that reveals regional identity of the person.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLIMENTS PRODUCED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN REGIONAL IDENTITIES

1. “–Nice looking, innit—nice looking babies!” (Smith, Z., p. 17).

The compliment is taken from the novel “NW” by a modern English writer Z. Smith. In the review to her novel the author says the following: “When I was writing this novel what I wanted to do was create people in language”. And the example cited above gives a good account of how people can be seen through the language they speak.

The compliment contains London slang word “innit” which means “isn’t it, are not, have not”, formed as a result of phonetic phenomenon called “glottal stop” – the omission (swallowing, dropping) of “t’s”. This slang word is a typical feature of Cockney dialect and is widely used by young middle class or middle-middle class Londoners with the intention to demonstrate that they are “cool or respectable”. The use of *Cockney dialect* shows definite English regional (London) urban-related identity of the character.

2. “Apple ain’t fallen far from the tree, **bruv**, for real” (Smith, Z., p. 76).

This is another example of a compliment which displays English regional urban-related identity of the speaker.

This complimentary address of a South Londoner is characterized by the mixed dialect: the *Estuary English* word “bruv” (the shorter version of ‘bruvva’), which is a slang word for “brother”, mainly used by South Londoners, and the grammatically incorrect form “ain’t” (meaning “am not, are not, is not, have not, has not, do not, does not, did not”), used in some varieties of *Black* and *Cockney English*, nonstandard and more common in the everyday speech. “It is used in both speech and writing to catch attention and to gain emphasis. In fiction “ain’t” is used for purposes of characterization; in familiar correspondence it tends to be the mark of a warm personal friendship” (Merriam Webster Collegiate English Dictionary).

3. “- Your man’s got his feet on her seat, **blud**.”

“- But it is your business, though? Why you tryna make it your business?

Who you callin’ blud? I ain’t your blud.”

“- I didn’t say it was my –” (Smith, Z., p. 118).

This compliment is expressed by the laudatory address “blud” which has the meaning “brother” mostly used in the UK. The form “blud” comes from “bredrin” (brother) or blood brother; “it doesn't have to mean a literal brother, it's more like a friend” (Urban Dictionary). The response of the interlocutor includes unintelligible “tryna” (“try to”), contraction “calin” with the absence of nasal postdorsal “-n” (“calling”) and the absence of auxiliary verb “are” in the Present Continuous tense in the interrogative sentence “Who you callin’ blud?” that shows irritation. All these features of communication exhibit the English *urban-related* regional identity of the citizens of London, who speak *Cockney dialect*.

4. “Bob leaned down and peered at the white bundle of soft blankets, looking into his son’s face for the first time. The power of speech returned. **“Yes, wee fella. Hello, there. You’ll like it out here, I think, Master JAS. Hope you’ll like us.”**

“ - No doubt about that, copper,” said his wife. “Hey! JAS – I like the sound of it. James Andrew Skinner, aka Jazz. Spelled J-A-Z-Z. That’s what we’ll call him. Yes, Bob?”

The new father threw back his head and laughed” (Jardine, Q., 1994, p. 2).

The compliment with the intention of greeting presents the situation of communication in which the couple is delighted to see the newborn baby. Addressing the baby the father calls his son “wee fella” using the *Scottish* word “wee” (“tiny”) which is normally used by the representatives of Scottish regional identity.

5. “— **For the bootiful young lady hupstairs.**” Then dexterously he dad placed his foot where the door had been about to shut and as dexterously produced from behind his back, in this other hand, while his now free one swept off his á la mode near-brimless topper, a little posy of crocuses. **“And for the heven more lovely one down.”** Mary had blushed a deep pink...” (Fowles, J., 1979, p. 80).

This compliment contains the words corrupted by the accent: “bootiful” (“beautiful”), “hupstairs” (“upstairs), “heven” (“even”). The illustration of the accent by graphical means testifies to the author’s intention to emphasize the character’s *English* regional *settlement* identity.

6. “I departed to renew my search; its result was disappointment, and Joseph's quest ended in the same.

“Yon lad gets war und war!” observed he on re-entering. ‘He's left th' gate at t' full swing, and Miss's pony has trodden dahn two rigs o' corn, and plattered through, raight o'er into t' meadow! Hahsomdiver, t' maister 'ull play t' devil to-morn, and he'll do weel. **He's patience ittself wi' sich careless, offald craters – patience ittself he is! Bud he'll not be soa allus - yah's see, all on ye! Yah mun'n't drive him out of his heead for nowt!**”

...

“Nay, nay, he's noan at Gimmerton,” said Joseph. ‘T's niver wonder but he's at t' bothom of a bog-hoile. This visitation worn't for nowt, and I wod hev' ye to look out, Miss – yah muh be t' next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks together for gooid to them as is choozen, and piked out fro' th' rubbidge! Yah know whet t' Scripture ses.’ And he began quoting several texts, referring us to chapters and verses where we might find them” (Bronte, E., p. 9)

The compliment to the addressee’s patience demonstrates the accent of an *English* villager, testifying to his *settlement* identity: his speech abounds in non-standard contracted

forms (th'gate, t'full, o'corn, o'ever, t'meadow, t'maister, 'ull, t'devil, to-morn, itsseln wi', offald, mun'n't, etc.), alongside with mispronunciation of words graphically presented by the author (und, dahn, maister, raight, nay, noan, weel, sich, ye, yah, head, nowt, niver, I wod hev' ye, muh, Hivin, warks, together, gooid, chozzen, piked, rubbidge, know, whet, ses, etc.) and grammar mistakes. The deviations from Standard English in the villager's speech are so ample and plentiful that it is difficult if not impossible for the listener of a different regional identity to follow and understand the speaker.

7. "I'm sorry, too. **I'm just a jealous, no-good bastard, I can't help it, I'm crazy about you.**"

And he kissed her again" (Baldwin, J., p. 61).

This highly emotional compliment "I'm crazy about you", meaning "I'm very much in love with you" is uttered by the representative of *American* regional identity. The compliment is accompanied by the apology in which the speaker uses colloquial American *vulgar* slang "bastard", a derogatory term meaning "a wretched and repellent male, *a son of a bitch*" (Spears, Richard A., 1991, c. 19]. In spite of the note in the reference books: "Crude and provocative. Caution with *bastard*" this slang word is frequently used by Americans in their speech.

8. "– Skeeter, **those poplin pants are just the cutest thing**, why haven't I seen those before?" Carroll Ringer says a few chairs away and I look up at her and smile, thinking *Because I wouldn't dare wear old clothes to a meeting and neither would you*" (Stockett, K., 2011, p. 207).

We can judge the *American* regional identity of the speaker, firstly, by the use of the word "pants" in the meaning of "trousers". In American English, the word "pants" is used to refer to men's or women's trousers whereas in British English "pants are underpants, esp. for women and children" (The Free Dictionary). And secondly, by the use of the expressive adjective "cute" in the superlative degree ("the cutest"), frequently used young American speakers.

9. "–You really can dance," I told the blonde one. "**You oughta be a pro.** I mean it. I danced with a pro once, and **you're twice as good as she was.** Did you ever hear of Marco and Miranda?"

"–What?" she said. She wasn't even listening to me. She was looking all around the place.

"–I said did you ever hear of Marco and Miranda?"

"–I don't know. No. I don't know."

"–Well, they're dancers, she's a dancer. She's not too hot, though. She does everything she's supposed to, but she's not so hot anyway. You know when a girl's really a terrific dancer?"

"–Wudga say?" she said. She wasn't listening to me, even. Her mind was wandering all over the place" (Salinger, J.D., p. 39).

The compliment to a professional dancer with the intention of praise is typical of a representative of *American* regional identity: it includes American slang word "pro" ("You oughta be a pro") which has the meaning "professional" (Spears, Richard A., 1991, c. 293), corrupted and unintelligible forms "oughta" ("ought to") and "wudga" ("Wudga say?"), denoting "What do you say?" used by less educated people.

10. “Miss Celia stares down at her burned hand. “**Missus Walters said you were a real good cook.**”

“That old woman eat two butter beans and say she full. I couldn’t get her to eat nothing.”

“How much was she paying you?”

“Dollar an hour,” I say, feeling kind of ashamed. Five years and not even minimum wage.

“Then I’ll pay you two.”

And I feel all the breath slip out of me.

“When Mister Johnny get out the house in the morning?” I ask, cleaning up the butterstick melting right on the counter, not even a plate under it.

“Six. He can’t stand to do-dad around here very long. Then he heads back from his real estate office about five.”

I do some figuring and even with the fewer hours it’d be more pay. But I can’t get paid if I get shot dead. “I’ll leave at three then. Give myself two hours coming and going so I can stay out a his way.”

“Good.” She nods. “It’s best to be safe” (Stockett, K., 2011, p. 44-45).

The complimentary remark (“Missus Walters said you were a real good cook”) is aimed to characterize the talents of the servant-girl in gastronomy. An American servant-girl, who is a representative of regional settlement identity, speaks *Black English*. Her speech abounds in lots of grammar mistakes and there is some compelling evidence about it: “that old woman eat” (the absence of “-s” ending that should be added to a verb going with the noun in the third person singular), “I couldn’t get her to eat nothing” (two negations in one sentence), “When Mister Johnny get out the house in the morning?” (the absence of an auxiliary verb in the interrogative sentence), “Give myself two hours coming and going so I can stay out a his way” (the letter “a” stands for the preposition “of”). The author by graphical means meticulously demonstrates the typical features of speech of the representative of regional Afro-American *settlement* identity.

11. “**Glad to meetcha. Heard a lot aboutcha.**” Then his face burst into an astonishing grin” (Yates, R., p. 113).

The compliment which has the intention of greeting exhibits the dialect of an *American* living in a *suburb*. It is characterized by neglectful pronunciation of the phrases “to meet you” (“to meetcha”), “about you” (“aboutcha”), typical of a villager’s unintelligible speech.

12. “... **Pretty nifty**, Franklin” (Yates, R., p. 103).

The compliment of praise “pretty nifty” of the representative of *settlement* identity reflects *American* regional identity of the speaker, who uses an American slang word “nifty” with the meaning “neat, smart” (Spears, Richard A., 1991, p. 253).

13. “You want some, Rufus?”

“No, **honey**, not yet. I’ll eat first” (Baldwin, J., p. 12).

The *American* regional identity in the example above is expressed by the complimentary address “honey” (“a pet name for somebody you like”) frequently used by Americans in their informal speech.

CONCLUSION

In this article the characteristic features of compliments produced by the representatives of British and American regional identities, urban-related and rural-related identities in particular, such as British English, American English, Cockney, Estuary English and Black English have been analysed. The research has been based on the material of English and American fiction of the XX and XXI centuries. The results of the study testify to the fact that speaking regional dialects people identify themselves with the place they live in, and their regional identity manifests itself in the language. This holds true with complimentary utterances: as a rule, they display the distinctive linguistic features characteristic of regional speech: phonetic peculiarities, contractions, typical slang words, vulgar slang, words and phrases frequently used in this or that dialect, units of vocabulary which are different in their usage while denoting the same notions, etc.

It is of importance to emphasize the fact that the compliments of the representatives of urban-related identity differ from the compliments produced by the representatives of rural-related, or settlement identity. The former being produced by educated or more or less educated people contain national slang, national forms of address and certain dialect words which can be understood by the listener, whereas the compliments produced by the representatives of settlement identity especially by uneducated people are very often difficult for an interlocutor of different identity to understand due to the accent, mispronunciations, the usage of different substandard words, non-standard contractions and grammar mistakes.

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