

**Maryna Kolisnyk**

PhD, Associate Professor  
National Technical University of Ukraine  
“Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”  
Kyiv, Ukraine  
ORCID ID 0000-0002-6697-5850  
*m.p.ruda@gmail.com*

**Yuliia Kornytska**

PhD, Associate Professor  
National Technical University of Ukraine  
“Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”  
Kyiv, Ukraine  
ORCID ID 0000-0002-4781-0807  
*kornytska.kpi@gmail.com*

**Olha Sokyrskya**

PhD, Senior lecture  
National Technical University of Ukraine  
“Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”  
Kyiv, Ukraine  
ORCID ID 0000-0001-8100-9709  
*olgasokyrskya@gmail.com*

---

## CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH DIALECTS

---

This article evaluates the current status of criteria development used for classifying dialects in modern English in Great Britain. Traditionally, regional criteria have been utilized, but this study explores the incorporation of urban, professional, and ethnic dialects in addition to rural regional dialects. The paper examines the classification hierarchy, which starts with geographical regions of the south and north and further expands into subzones and counties. Further utilized criteria are related to the type of locality, and it entails analysing the distinctions between dialects spoken in urban and rural areas, as well as migration and ethnicity. The study emphasizes the significance of creating more precise and comprehensive criteria for dialect classification, given the expanding scope of studying dialectal features and the association between dialect and social status. Our analysis of the development degree of the criteria for classifying dialects shows the overdue possibility of creating an integral typological map of the dialects of modern British English, correlated with the features and frequency characteristics of their functioning in real life.

**Keywords:** English language; dialects; identification criteria; geographic zones; socio-cultural status; classification of dialects.

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the English dialectologist Wright (2018) assumed that after 1920 the study of dialects in English would not be relevant. The reason for this he saw in the disappearance of a purely dialectal language even in rural areas due to the education of speakers and the spread of modern means of intercultural and interpersonal communication, on the one hand. And, on the other hand, he predicted the lack of interest among scholars in the study of dialects. Nevertheless, as Upton and Widdowson (1996) have rightly pointed out, this prediction has not been confirmed, because even today not only individual scientists, but whole scientific communities continue to be engaged in the study of modern dialects of the English language.

The variant of language that Wright identified as the most used and academically accepted is of high interest in modern dialectology as well. Here it should be noted that not only rural regional dialects of English are studied. The object sphere of studying the dialectal features of various languages is constantly expanding, without excluding the dialects traditionally studied from the perspective of their territorial affiliation. Such expansion is possible due to the inclusion of urban, professional, ethnic dialects as objects of study, as well as the links between the dialect and the social status of speakers, their age, gender, occupation, etc. (Trudgill, 2000; Hughes, 1993; Crystal, 2015; Yule, 1996; O'Connor, 1999; Chambers, 1998 and others). At the same time, the urgency of solving a number of problems associated with the deepening of the systematization and generalization of the scientific knowledge already developed by dialectologists increases naturally.

Therefore, **the purpose of this paper** is via study of currently available approaches to analyse the current state of criteria development for the classification of dialects in modern English in Great Britain with the following systematization of the received knowledge in a form of a unified diagram.

## 2. METHODS

The following methods are exploited: descriptive method (used to substantiate the selected theoretical material), method of analysis (for interpretation and systematization of selected theoretical material), deductive method (used in the transition from general description to direct analysis).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditionally the regional criterion is used in the processes of the systematization of English dialects. On its basis dialects are classified, first of all, into the geographical zones of the south and the north. This tendency can be traced back to the Old English period (Crystal, 2015). At the same time, Crystal (2015) points out the coincidence of the functioning of modern British dialects with the zones of their distribution in the Old and Middle English periods, namely that the border between the northern regions and the other part of England coincides to a certain extent with the border between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia. A secondary boundary, in his view, separates the Midland area from the more southern regions of the country. In some cases, whenever necessary, specific sub-zones of dialect distribution can be distinguished in the north and south zones, relying on different ranges (the north of the country, the county of Norfolk, the city of Newcastle). This thesis is also held by Trudgill (2000), who distinguishes certain regions in these zones and, therefore, for a more accurate and complete hierarchical picture of the modern territorial dialects of England, he divides the zones of the north into northern and central regions. The group of northern dialects includes the north-eastern regions and those to the south. The latter Trudgill divides into central regions of the north, central Lancashire and Humberside. The central region consists of west-central (Merseyside, northwest Midland, west Midland) and east-central (central Midland, northeast Midland, east Midland) areas. The "South" zone covers the eastern and south-western regions, which are also divided into: The South Midland, eastern England, counties adjacent to London – the eastern region; the upper southwest, central southwest, and lower southwest - the southwest region (Trudgill, 2000; Crystal, 2015).

The next in the hierarchy is the territorial criterion or feature, on the basis of which in a more detailed study of the dialects of the English language their corresponding division into counties is applied. It is known that most dialectologists consider Ellis's classification of dialects (1869) to be the most complete, and a fairly accurate representation of the dialectal map of modern Britain. Naturally, therefore, the basis of modern classifications of dialects is this classification, according to which the dialects of Great Britain are subdivided into:

- 1) Northern dialects, represented by three subgroups: (1) Northumberland, North Durham; (2) South Durham, most of Cumberland, Westmoreland, North Lancashire, the hilly part of West Riding in Yorkshire; (3) East Riding and North Riding in Yorkshire;
- 2) Midland dialects, comprising ten districts: (1) Lincolnshire; (2) southeast Lancashire, northeast Cheshire, northwest Derbyshire; (3) southwest Lancashire, area south of the Ribble River; (4) central Lancashire, Isle of Man; (5) south Yorkshire, area southwest of the River Wharf; (6) most

of Cheshire, north Staffordshire; 7) most of Derbyshire; (8) Nottinghamshire; (9) Flint, Denbighshire; (10) east Shropshire, south Staffordshire, most of Warwickshire, south Derbyshire, Leicestershire;

3) eastern dialects, divided into five districts: 1) Cambridgeshire, Rutland, northeast Northamptonshire; 2) most of Essex and Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire; central Northamptonshire; 3) Norfolk and Suffolk; 4) most of Buckinghamshire; 5) Middlesex, southeast Buckinghamshire, south Hertfordshire, southwest Essex;

4) western dialects, consisting of two subgroups: (1) west and south Shropshire (west of the River Severn); (2) Herefordshire, except its eastern part, Radnor, eastern Bracknock;

5) the southern dialects, comprising ten sub-groups: (1) parts of Pembrokeshire and Glamorganshire; (2) Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, north and east of Somersetshire, most of Gloucestershire, southwest Devonshire; (3) most of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, most of Berkshire, south of Surrey, west of Sussex; (4) north Gloucestershire, east Herefordshire, Worcestershire, south Warwickshire, north Oxfordshire, southwest Northamptonshire; (5) most of Oxfordshire; (6) north of Surrey, northwest Kent; (7) most of Kent, east of Sussex; (8) west Somersetshire, northeast Devonshire; (9) east Cornwall, most of Devonshire; (10) west Cornwall.

The expediency of classifying dialects into Southern and Northern zones can be confirmed by the works of Preston and Shuy (1988) and Smith (1979). The scientists in their study of the US English language dialects, distributed them into the main groups “North” and “South”, with further allocation of specific regions, similar to the distribution of dialects proposed by Crystal. Therefore, when studying any dialect of the English language, we can refer it to one of the main groups, based on the regional principle of their classification.

The next criterion, common in the study of territorial dialects, is the type of locality. This is due to the fact that at the beginning of the birth of the dialect tradition in English studies the peculiarities of the language of the inhabitants of rural areas were analysed (Kurath, 1939–1943; Ellis, 1896; Wright, 2018; and others). Over time, scholars began to note the differences in the language of urban dwellers from the standard variant of English. The division into urban dialects and rural dialects can be found in the works of Crystal (2015), Trudgill (2000), Hughes (1993) and others. The definition of the concepts of rural and urban dialects, in particular pronunciation, is offered by O’Connor (1991). The study of regional pronunciation can be based, as O’Connor (1991) notes, on the study of the features of speech spread over large and small territories. In addition, due attention should also be paid to the study of the accents of a particular locality, peculiar to a small number of people, usually the elderly, in order to preserve the older form of a variety of language. According to the definition of Luzhanitsa (2005), the rural dialect is a naturally formed socio-regional system of verbal communication, used according to certain rules by a significant group of people who have long lived in a certain territory. As for the urban dialect, Luzhanitsa (2005) considers it as a genetically heterogeneous version of the English language, formed due to the levelling of dialectal features, which, on the one hand, is a combination of the literary language and dialect, and on the other - its residual form.

Among the regional dialects, Trudgill (2000) also suggests distinguishing between traditional and mainstream dialects. The first group covers the dialects predominantly found in rural areas, but they also function in some cities in Scotland. Traditional dialects tend to retain, as much as possible, features inherited from past generations of the country’s sedentary population, rather than features inherent in the supra-dialect literary form of the language. Traditional dialects are considered difficult to understand because of their specificity (pronunciation, grammatical structure, vocabulary). Therefore, their functioning in real life is rather limited, although they often appear in literature written in a particular dialect, collections of local folklore, etc.

In contrast to the traditional dialects, the mainstream, or functioning dialects are widely used in everyday communication of a particular region. The dialects in this group differ slightly from each other as well as from literary English. Having analysed the above classification, Carston (1999) notes that its basic principle is intralingual structure. However, from our point of view, this criterion is not sufficient for Trudgill’s classification given above. In this case, the intralingual structure and the

frequency of their functioning seem more appropriate for distinguishing the traditional and predominant dialects.

The study of dialects solely from the standpoint of their territorial features is not, as noted above, sufficient. The most complete, from our point of view, is the approach of Trudgill and Chambers (1998), who argue that all dialects should be considered simultaneously as regional and social, since speakers of a particular dialect have regional characteristics along with social ones. Thus, developing a linguistic atlas of New England, Kurat (1939–1943) bases his research on such social factors as age and education, dividing informants: (1) by education: low level (basic reading and writing skills), medium level (high school level), high level (university education); (2) by age: seniors, middle-aged people and children (Kurath, 1939–1943; Chambers, 1998). In a study of Norwich English, Norfolk County, Trudgill and Chambers (1998) focused on the social class of informants, taking into account which representatives of different dialects were grouped into middle-class, low middle-class, high working-class, middle working-class, and low working-class people. At the same time, the distribution of informants into classes was carried out taking into account their occupation, education, income, parents' occupation, type of housing, and locality. A similar principle was applied to the study of the English language of Jamaican residents, but the authors focused on three classes of informants: high, middle, and low (Chambers, 1998). The analysis of the language of adolescents from the English city of Reading, Berkshire County, was based on the index of their vernacular culture (hereinafter referred to as the IVC-Index of vernacular culture). According to this criterion, the respondents were divided into the following classes: A – informants with a very high IVC, B – informants with a high IVC, C – informants who have an average IVC, D – informants with a low IVC (Chambers, 1998).

The relationship between the social class of speakers and a particular dialect can be represented as follows: standard English → social class ← regional variety of the language. It is worth noting that, according to Trudgill and Hughes (1993), there is the same relationship between social class and dialect as between the social status of an individual and his accent, i.e., the higher the social status of a person in society, the less regionally marked his language is.

When selecting the criteria for classifying dialects, it is also often necessary to take into account the gender features of their speakers. For example, considering the gender specificity of pronunciation, O'Connor (1991) notes that the speech of men and women differs regardless of the type of accent and social class. According to O'Connor's observations, women's pronunciation is more correct, as they are more sensitive to the correctness of speech, while men's speech is based on their own desires and preferences.

Our analysis has also shown that various criteria have been published in scientific sources to determine the social attributes of a particular dialect. And, nevertheless, as noted above, practically all dialects can be correlated with the three social levels of their speakers: high, medium, and low.

Not any less important at the present stage of dialectology is the criterion of dialect origin, since the ethnic factor continues to have an increasing influence on the development of the English language. This criterion allows us to distinguish between natural and migratory dialects. Within the group of natural dialects, it is expedient to distinguish their ethnic and national varieties, whereas within the migration group the division into migration and emigration dialects seems rational. Within national dialects, in our opinion, should be considered those dialects that evolved from the standard English language under the influence of territorial and social factors. This can also include standard English itself, as the most widespread and the most used dialect and, according to Trudgill and Hughes (1993), recognized as the standard of modern English. The fact that this dialect is spoken by educated people in the British Isles, in schools, universities, on radio and television, once again confirms the legitimacy of its assignment to national dialects.

As for ethnic dialects, they developed in the process of historical interaction of the standard English language with the languages of ethnic groups of a specific country. Such dialects are no exception. They occur in countries where English became the official language during the colonial conquests. Thus, for example, in the variant of the English language of New Zealand function certain elements borrowed from the language of the Mari aborigines (Crystal, 2015). In India a great

influence on varieties of English is exerted by Hindi, which is also the official language of the country. Burmese adds ethnic peculiarities to the English language of Myanmar, and in Ghana the Akan language plays this role. Swahili language units are widespread impregnations in the English language of East Africa (Zhluhtenko, 1981).

As for migrant dialects, an example of a migrant variety is Estuary English, which is a set of specific features of the south-eastern dialects, RP and Cockney, which became widely used due to the migration (high mobility) of the population across the country (Kalyta & Taranenko, 2010).

The existence of emigrant dialects is predetermined by the presence in the country of natives from various countries. So, for example, Canadian and American variants of the English language, as Zhluhtenko (1964) notes, are influenced by the Ukrainian language. The emergence of this variety of English is associated with the desire of the diaspora to preserve certain elements inherent in Ukrainian culture.

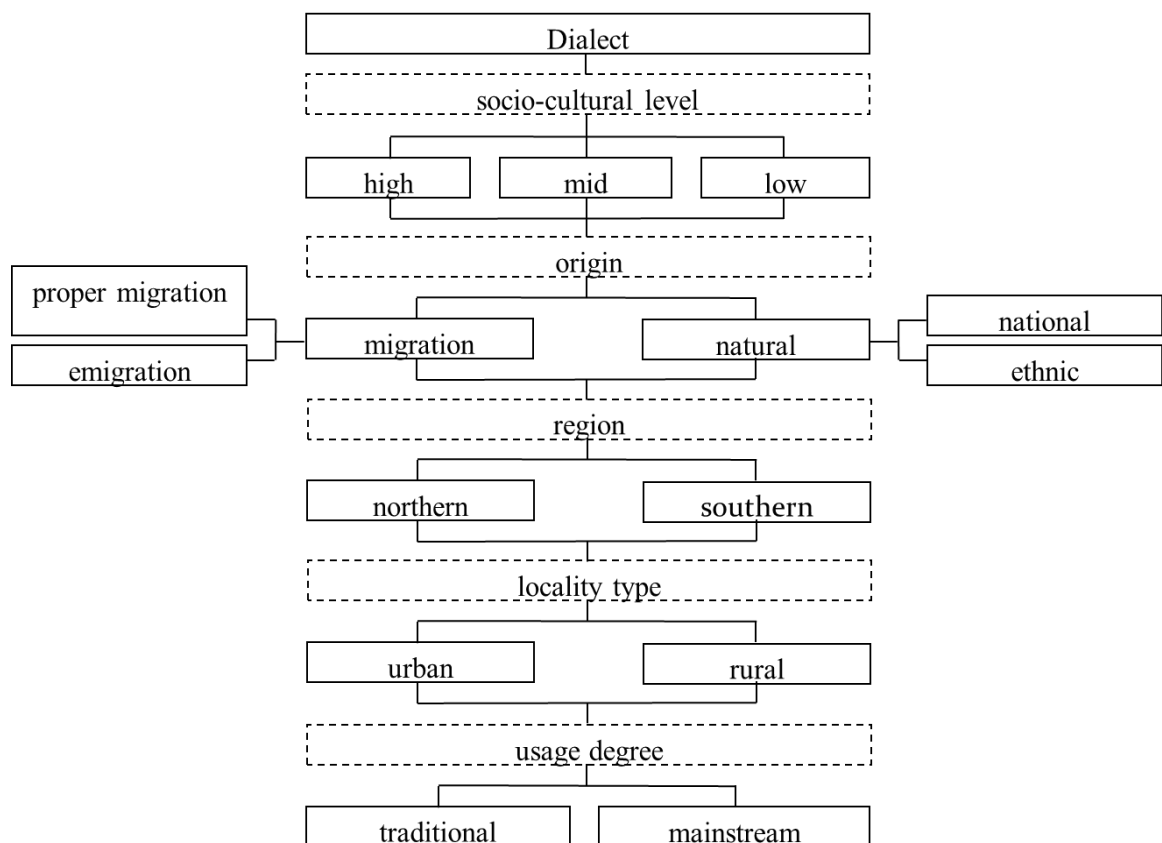


Fig. 1. Generalized classification of dialect features

As we can see, any dialect of English can be identified on the basis of a quite definite set of linguistic features inherent in it. And can be systemized into a generalized classification of dialect features shown on Fig. 1. The most common criteria for distinguishing one or another dialect are the socio-cultural level of speakers, the origin of dialects, the region, the type of locality, and the frequency of their functioning. At the same time, each of these criteria, if necessary, can be differentiated into a certain number of levels of its actualization. Thus, within the framework of the sociocultural level, high, medium and low dialects can be distinguished. According to their origin, they are divided into natural and migratory varieties of the language. Which are classified, in turn, into national and ethnic, in the case of natural dialects, and into migratory and emigratory, in the case of migratory dialects. As for region and type of locality, the more common classification prevails, namely the division into south, north, and east, west, with a further delineation of specific districts or counties. When it comes to the type of locality, dialects are divided into rural and urban. When it comes to frequency of functioning and intralingual structure, it is quite obvious that it is appropriate to distinguish between traditional and predominant dialects.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SCOPE FOR THE FURTHER RESEARCH

Our analysis of the development degree of the criteria for classifying dialects shows the overdue possibility of creating an integral typological map of the dialects of modern British English, correlated with the features and frequency characteristics of their functioning in real life.

The scope for further research lies in its practical application.

#### REFERENCES

- Carston, R. (1999). Herbert H. Clark, Using language. *Journal of Linguistics*, 35(1), 167–222. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022226798217361>
- Chambers, J. K., & Trudgill, P. (1998). *Dialectology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2015). *The Cambridge encyclopaedia of the English language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, A. J. (1869). *On early English pronunciation: With especial reference to Shakespeare and Chaucer, containing an investigation of the correspondence of writing with speech in England from the Anglosaxon period to the present day, preceded by a systematic notation of all spoken sounds by means of the ordinary printing types*. Pub. for the Philological society by Asher & co., and the Early English text society and the Chaucer society, by Trübner & co.
- Hughes, A., & Trudgill, P. (1993). *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of British English*. London: Arnold. <https://doi.org/10.2307/413555>
- Kalyta, A., & Taranenko, L. (2010). *Concise Dictionary of Phonetic Terms*. Ternopil: Pidruchnyky i posibnyky.
- Kurath, H. (1939–1943). *Linguistic atlas of New England*. Brown University Providence.
- Luzhanitsa, Ye. I. (2005). Typy sovremennykh angliyskikh dialektov [Types of modern English dialects]. *Bulletin of ZNU. Philological Sciences*, 3, 84–91. [in Russian]
- O'Connor, J. D. (1999). *Phonetics (Penguin Language and Linguistics)*. Penguin UK.
- Preston, D., & Shuy, R. (1988). *Varieties of American English*. Washington: English Language Programs Division.
- Smith, R. B., & Lance, D. M. (1979). Standard and Disparate Varieties of English in the United States: Educational and Sociopolitical Implications. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 21, 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1979.21.127>
- Trudgill, P. (2000). *The dialects of England*. The Macmillan Company.
- Upton, C., & Widdowson, J. D. (1996). *Introduction*. In C. Upton & J. D. Widdowson (Eds.), *An Atlas of English Dialects* (pp. I–XXIII). Oxford University Press.
- Wright, J. (2018). *English Dialect Grammar: Comprising the Dialects of England, of the Shetland and Orkney Islands, and of Those Parts of Scotland, Ireland & Wales Where English Is Habitually Spoken*. Creative Media Partners, LLC.
- Yule, G. (1996). *The study of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zhukhtenko, Yu. O. (1964). *Ukrayinsko-angliyski mizhmovni vidnosyny. Ukrayinska mova u SSHA i Kanadi [Ukrainian-English interlanguage relations. Ukrainian language in the USA and Canada]*. Kyiv. [in Ukrainian]
- Zhukhtenko, Yu. A., Karaban, V. I., & Bykhovets, N. N. (1981). *Varianty polinatsionalnykh literaturnykh yazykov [Variants of multinational literary languages]*. K.: Naukova dumka. [in Russian]

#### СПИСОК ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

- Жлуктенко Ю. О. Українсько-англійські міжмовні відносини. Українська мова у США і Канаді. К., 1964. 196 с.
- Жлуктенко Ю. А., Карабан В. І., Быховец Н. Н. Варианты полинациональных литературных языков. К.: Наукова думка, 1981. 234 с.
- Калита А., Тараненко Л. Concise Dictionary of Phonetic Terms. Тернопіль: Підручники і посібники, 2010. 180 с.
- Лужаница Е. И. Типы современных английских диалектов. *Вісник ЗНУ. Філологічні науки*. 2005. № 3. С. 84–91.
- Carston R. Herbert H. Clark, Using language. *Journal of Linguistics*. 1999. Vol. 35, №1. P. 167–222. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022226798217361>
- Chambers J. K., Trudgill P. *Dialectology*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 296 с.
- Crystal D. *The Cambridge encyclopaedia of the English language*. Cambridge University Press, 2015. 800 p.
- Ellis A. J. *On early English pronunciation: With especial reference to Shakespeare and Chaucer, containing an investigation of the correspondence of writing with speech in England from the Anglosaxon period to the present day, preceded by a systematic notation of all spoken sounds by means of the ordinary printing types*. Pub. for the Philological society by Asher & co., and the Early English text society and the Chaucer society, by Trübner & co, 1869.
- Hughes A., Trudgill P. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of British English*. London: Arnold, 1993. <https://doi.org/10.2307/413555>
- Kurath H. *Linguistic atlas of New England*. Brown University Providence, 1939–1943.
- O'Connor J. D. *Phonetics (Penguin Language and Linguistics)*. Penguin UK, 1999.
- Preston D., Shuy R. *Varieties of American English*. Washington: English Language Programs Division, 1988.
- Smith R. B., Lance D. M. Standard and Disparate Varieties of English in the United States: Educational and Sociopolitical Implications. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 1979. Vol. 21. P. 127–140.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1979.21.127>

Trudgill P. The dialects of England. The Macmillan Company, 2000.

Upton C., Widdowson J. D. Introduction / C. Upton & J. D. Widdowson (Eds.), *An Atlas of English Dialects*. Oxford University Press, 1996. P. I–XXIII

Wright J. English Dialect Grammar: Comprising the Dialects of England, of the Shetland and Orkney Islands, and of Those Parts of Scotland, Ireland & Wales Where English Is Habitually Spoken. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2018.

Yule G. The study of language. Cambridge University Press., 1996. 230 p.

**Марина Колісник, Юлія Корницька, Ольга Сокирська. Розробка критеріїв класифікації англійських діалектів.** У цій статті розглядається стан розвитку критеріїв, які використовуються для класифікації діалектів англійської мови у Великій Британії. Основними критеріями традиційно вважаються регіональні, але у цьому дослідженні також розглядається включення міських, професійних та етнічних діалектів. Дослідження також розглядає класифікаційну ієрархію, яка починається з географічних регіонів і розширюється до підзон і графств, а також інші критерії, такі як тип місцевості, міграція та етнічна приналежність. Основний акцент статті ставиться на необхідності створення більш точних та всеосяжних критеріїв для класифікації діалектів з огляду на зв'язок між діалектом і соціальним статусом, а також розширення сфери вивчення діалектних особливостей.

**Ключові слова:** англійська мова; діалекти; критерії ідентифікації; географічні зони; соціокультурний статус; класифікація діалектів.

*Received: April 28, 2023*

*Accepted: May 12, 2023*