

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

‘People often use language to signal their membership of a particular group. Social status, gender, age, ethnicity, and the kinds of social networks people belong to turn out to be important dimensions of identity in many communities.’ (Holmes 2001:123)

Language has no boundaries. Speakers of the same language may live in different countries. And a country may have many languages. But often, one of the languages of a country is chosen to be the standard language. In addition, this is the language taught in the schools and used for official businesses. The standard language is used for easier communication. It is also used to unite the people. On the other hand, people sometimes use non-standard language.

‘The term standard is used in many different ways by linguists. A standard variety is generally one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularization or codification (for example, in grammar and a dictionary); it is recognized as a prestigious variety or code by a community (Holmes 2001:76)

Therefore, non-standard English is a variety of English that is considered to be ‘incorrect’ and contains many grammatical mistakes.

The higher social groups use more of the standard grammatical forms and fewer instances of the vernacular or non-standard form, while the lower groups use the fewer standard form. People from different social classes speak differently; the most obvious differences are in vocabulary. (Holmes 2001:143).

In general, dialectologists can distinguish regional varieties for almost every English speaking country. Some dialects such as Scouse, Cockney, Geordie, even have distinct names showing how significant they are in distinguishing groups from one another. A person’s dialect reflects their social background. Social dialects are distinguished from their features in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar according to the social group of the speakers. (Holmes, 2001:132)

The topic of my thesis is non-standard English used in the film My Fair Lady, a story of a phonetics professor, Henry Higgins, who makes a bet with Colonel Pickering that he can transform Eliza Doolittle, a thick-accented Cockney flower girl into a fine duchess. I choose this topic because many forms of non-standard English are found in the film. In that film, several characters also use non-standard English in their speeches. I choose the film because I find that there are so many phonological features of Cockney, which are considered non-standard English used by the characters

Cockney is ‘the working-class dialect of London, and one of the most noticeable of all the regional accents of England. The sounds are very different from the standard English, and it has a number of conspicuous grammatical features’ (Gritchka, 2003). Yet

in this film, I notice that apparently Cockney English is not only used by the characters coming from the lower class, but also by character from the upper classes. In my analysis, I will focus on the social factors of people using Cockney English or non standard English.

For my analysis I am going to deal with the phonological, syntactic, and semantic features found in Cockney English, such the ‘aitch’ dropping and replacement [aɪ] with [eɪ] . Phonology is the branch of linguistics which investigates the ways in which speech sounds are used systematically to form words and utterances. Besides using phonology, I look for the syntactic features found in Cockney English which are considered non-standard English, such as the use of *ain’t* or double negative. Syntax is the study of how words combine to make sentences. (Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005. © 1993-2004 Microsoft Corporation.) In addition, I look for the semantic features found in Cockney English, like slang words.

To find out the reasons why they use non-standard forms, I base my analysis on Sociolinguistics, which studies the social factors. The first of which is participant, which is related to the user of language or who is talking to whom (e.g. wife-husband). The second factor is the setting or social context of the interaction or where they are speaking (e.g. at home, office). The third is the topic, what is being talked about. And the last is the function, the aim or purpose of the interaction or why they are speaking. The method research which I use in gathering the data is library research because the data analyzed are in the form of written text taken from the film My Fair Lady.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that will be analyzed in this thesis are:

1. What are the phonological, syntactic and semantic forms of non-standard English found in the film My Fair Lady?
2. What are the social factors which influence the use of non-standard English?

Purpose of the Study

Having set the problems above, I intend:

1. To find out the phonological, syntactic and semantic forms of non-standard English found in the film My Fair Lady.
2. To find out the social factors which influence the use of non-standard English.

Method of Research

I watch the film and transcribe some dialogues showing the use of the non-standard English. Then I classify the data according to the linguistic types of non-standard English. After that, I analyze each data by relating it to the social factors which support it. Finally, I draw the conclusion based on my discussion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One, the Introduction, contains Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of Thesis. Chapter Two provides the background of

Cockney, which is considered non-standard English and the theories of Phonology, Syntax, Semantics and Sociolinguistics. Chapter Three contains the analysis of non-standard English found in the film “My Fair Lady” by George Cukor. Chapter Four is the Conclusion, based on the analysis in the previous chapter and the last is the Bibliography.