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English language varieties in Shaw's *Pygmalion*

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Abstract

Everything around us is in a state of change and movement: living creatures, matter, energy, earth, technology, and languages, too. Because everything that is created develops and changes, language is also created as a communication tool that changes over time.

In this paper, a thorough analysis is made to describe these changes. For this purpose, George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, written more than a hundred years ago, is used as a case study to show how language is represented, by focusing on differences between the language used by the lower working class, considered as non-standard, and the language used by the upper middle class, which tends to belong to the overt prestige form, or standard English. A corpus was built in order to analyse the language used in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, the distinctive features of the language varieties of the different classes and the semantic shift of the words in the corpus.

Keywords: *Shaw, language change, language difference, dialect, Cockney English, Standard English*