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LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH AS THEY ARE REPRESENTED IN THE NOVEL “BOYHOOD: SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE” BY JOHN MAXWELL COETZEE

The global spread of English over the last 50 years is remarkable. The Republic of South Africa is also among the countries where English is spoken. It is distinguished as a separate variety of the English language – South African English.

Due to a great influence of indigenous South African languages, various dialects of South African English have appeared. Moreover, during the apartheid era “ethnic varieties” appeared.

At the beginning of the novel “Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life” by J. M. Coetzee the protagonist’s mother Vera declares that she wishes she had a horse to *go riding in the veld*. The word *veld* is one of a few internationally common English words of Afrikaans origin. In Afrikaans and Dutch, it literally means ‘field’.

The word that once was an international English word *bioscope* in the meaning of ‘cinema’ is common in South African English: “Though he (John) goes to the *bioscope* every Saturday afternoon <...>” (J. M. Coetzee). The word became defunct elsewhere, but it has survived longer in South Africa as a result of the influence of the Afrikaans cognate *bioskoop*.

Several words have entered South African English vocabulary from Afrikaans slang. In one of the chapters John recollects Eddie, a coloured boy whom he knew, and imagines Eddie “smoking *stompies* with the older Coloured boys” (J. M. Coetzee). John wonders if he would recognize Eddie despite his *dagga*-smoking.

Stompie is an Afrikaans slang word meaning ‘a cigarette butt’. The word *dagga* is the most common Afrikaans slang word for marijuana. It derives from the Khoikoin language.

As far as syntactic features are concerned, there are no important grammatical variations from Standard English in formal South African speech or writing. Several distinctive constructions are found in colloquial speech such as the non-standard use of auxiliaries. For example, *we did move here a week already* instead of *we had moved here a week previously*.

The use of *is it* as a response tag: – *They were here recently. – Is it?*; omitting of an object pronoun: – *I asked for the car. – And did you get?*

Still such grammatical peculiarities were not found in the novel. The author used syntactic structures of Standard English in formal writing.

The acquired data indicate that the main source of borrowings in South African English is Afrikaans. J. M. Coetzee uses borrowings to show the influence of the indigenous languages as well as of the authentic African culture and traditions on the formation of the protagonist’s idiolect and his worldview.