“Hey, cat, give me 4-1-1!”

Maybe, now you are wondering ***”what the hell does the headline mean?***“, but don´t worry, this article will explain it to you. Firstly, I have to start with short linguistic explanation of one term which is related to the topic, and it is important for your orientation in the issue.

The term **African American English** (formerly referred to as ‘African American Vernacular English’- AAVE - and much earlier as ‘Black English’) refers to the varieties of English spoken by those people in the United States who stem from the original African population transported there. These speakers are currently distributed geographically across the entire country. However, the African Americans were originally settled in the south (from Texas in the West to the Carolinas in the East) where they were kept as slaves to provide a labour force for the plantations of the whites in this region.

Are you in now? If yes, let´s continue with your reading. During my teaching, almost every single lesson, which is about grammar I am facing to your complaints about: ***”Why are we learning about such comlicated grammar or staffs like that when we don´t need it in real life?”*** And my students know my answer. I know the language, its usage and various perspectives and everytime I respond to you samely or similarly, that as you should know the standard form of Slovak language, although you use many varieties or dialects, it is the same with many other languages and always I tell you its „real“ usage in not formal usage. This is the reason, why I want to share with you my experience with so called BLACK ENGLISH.

I would like to start with one saying of very famous and excellent Afro-American female writer of the 20th century Toni Morrison: ***“The language, only the language...it is the thing that black people love so much – the saying the words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them. It is a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher´s: to make you stan dup out of your seat, make you lose yourself and ear yourself. The worst of all possible things that could happen is to lose that language. These certain things I cannot say without recourse my language.”***

***TONI MORRISON (she is the topic for the corner of our English library, but she deserves to be mentioned everywhere it can be done☺)***

So, let´s go back to the headline **HEY, CAT, GIVE ME 4-1-1!** I was really surprised about some specific words and phrases, because I´ve never heard them. So, the first one CAT. Its usage and meaning is very similar to the using colloquial word fellow, but with a little bit different using, because fellow (or fella) is quite general, just pointing at some friend. Cat´s meaning is: **A person, usually male and generally considered or thought to be cool**. Then I was trying to crack the meaning of 4-1-1 and I found out that if you need some information in the USA you can dial that number. They transfer the meaning and use it as a verb **when you need to hear some information from your friends, to be involved in the topic, a.k.a to get know something.**

My experiences always convince me, that you have to be careful about using some words and phrases in some ways. Another word is e.g. **A CUPCAKE**. Everybody knows what it means **(a very popular kind of cake in size of a cup packed in a parchement paper pastry basket with some icing cream on the top**), but the meaning could also be changed in some context and **then you can be to abusive and to harm somebody´s feeling, mostly female ones, because it is a vulgar word for a prostitute or a call girl/escort.**

I swear that in the next **English March Corner** I will bring more about this wonderful and interesting variety of English language, because this you cannot do with your mother tongue and in REAL LIFE you have to be carefull about what you are going to say, so that you won´t be vulgar or to be that person who can harm somebody´s feelings because of crudeness in language.

