STUDY THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH

A. Najmiddinov

Kokand State Pedagogical Institute
23, Turon Str., Tashkent 713000 Uzbekistan
intellect_star@mail.ru

Abstract. As we know today English has become the universal language. It is spoken all over the world. So it has several national varieties. In fact, we have "native" varieties of English and non-native varieties of English which are called non-native English. American English is one of a few native varieties of English the others being Canadian English, New Zealand English, South African English and Australian English. In these countries, English has become the native language of people, though each of them has its own characteristics, which differentiate them from British English. Among all these varieties, the place of American English is quite unique. The world English speakers tend to have as a model one of the native varieties of English. American English is becoming today's world language. Its impact is all-pervasive on the English-speaking world. Some significant information about the differences between American and British English were given in this article.

Keywords: American English, British English, English language, pronunciation, varieties of English.

The reasons for the change in the position of American English are essentially non-linguistic. In fact, language and power go together, American English is accepted for the power and superiority, which USA has acquired in the areas of science, technology, commerce, military affairs and politics. It has now become the centre of Western political, economic and technological innovations and activities.

The speakers of European countries have become tolerant of the encroachment of American English into their English. Even it is notable in the Great Britain that the British Press is opening up to American innovations. The style of American news magazines like Time and Newsweek shows up in British newspapers. The same tendency is seen in the use of the verbs of American English such as ban (prohibit), crash (collide), cut (reduce) and probe (investigate) in the press, at social gatherings, and on the radio and also television.

In the same way, in a number of countries in South-west Asia and India, the Americanization of the native languages has become a symbol of Westernization. For the new generation, Westernization means modernization. Recently, the United States of America has become a phenomenon of envy and emulation for the new and emerging nations. This is because it combines technology, scientific progress and, above all, power. Hollywood movies, students, faculty, scholars and researchers training programs have also spread American English in the world. This can be noticed in the newspapers published from New Delhi, Singapore or Jakarta.

American English has its own peculiarities with regard to lexical items word formation and grammar. It has developed new elements in vocabulary, phrasing, syntax and pronunciation. The difference between AE and BE in the field of spellings is notable. The famous American linguist Noah Webster worked on these differences. He wrote the spellings “favour, nabor, hed, giv, ruf” instead of “favour, neighbour, head, give, rough”, respectively. A number of words in British English are spelled differently in American English.

The American on going to England or the British traveler on arriving in America is likely to be impressed by them, because each finds the other's expressions amusing when they do not actually cause puzzlement. As examples of such differences the words connected with the railroad and the automobile are often cited. The British word for railroad is railway, the engineer is a driver, the conductor a guard. The baggage car is a van, and the baggage carried is always luggage. American freight train, freight yard become in Britain goods train and goods yard. Some of the more technical terms are likewise different. A sleeper in the United States is a sleeping car; in Britain it is what Americans call a tie. American switch is a point, a grade crossing a level crossing, and so on. In connection with the automobile, the British speak of a lorry (truck), windscreen (windshield), bonnet (hood), sparking plugs, gear lever (gearshift), gearbox (transmission), silencer (muffler), boot (trunk), petrol (gasoline or gas). British motorway is American.
expressway and dual carriageway is divided highway. Such differences can be found in almost any part of the
vocabulary: lift (elevator), post (mail), hoarding (billboard), nappy (diaper), spanner (wrench), underground
(subway), cotton wool (absorbent cotton), barrister (lawyer), dustman (garbage collector). Americans readily
recognize the American character of ice cream soda, apple pie, popcorn, free lunch, saloon from their
associations, and can understand why some of them would not be understood elsewhere.

A large part of the American vocabulary has been borrowed from other languages. A large number of
words are borrowed from the language of the American Indians. Many long words of the Indians are
shortened and simplified by the Americans. Similarly, they have altered the forms of some words. The words
were given English elements and new meanings. For example, the word 'we jack' is turned into 'woodchuck'.
Many words are taken from the names of American flora and fauna. For example, the words like 'chipmunk,
hickory, terrapin', and the like. Such words refer to the nature of America. Further, some words in American
English are borrowed from other languages like Yiddish, French, German and Spanish as well. This is not true
of most of the early words adopted by the colonists from the Native Americans for Native American things.
Other words associated with American things have at times been accepted fairly readily: telephone,
phonograph, typewriter, ticker, prairie are familiar examples. Some American political terms, especially
those associated with less admirable practices, have also been taken in: caucus, logrolling, graft, to stump,
among others. It is easy to recognize the American origin of such words as to lynch, blizzard, jazz, joyride,
bucket shop, but in many other cases the American origin of a word has been forgotten or the word has been
so completely accepted in Britain that the dictionaries do not think it important any longer to state the fact.
Thus, vocabulary is the major field of difference between American English and British English.

The differences in grammar and syntax between American English and British English are small but
notable. The two minor differences are concerned with the word-form 'dive' and the phrase does have. The
Americans use the form 'dove' for the form 'dived' in British English. In American English 'I have got' means
'I have' while. 'I have gotten' means 'I have acquired'. But in British English only the first form is used.

Another difference of grammar is concerned with the pronoun 'one'. An American will say: "If one loses
his temper, he should apologize". Thus, he will use the third person pronoun for 'one'. But an Englishman will
say: "If one loses one's temper, one should apologize". Thus, an Englishman will use the pronoun 'one' for all
the times.

Another difference of syntax between these two varieties of English lies in the use of collective nouns. In
British English, both singular and plural verbs can be used for the collective nouns. For example, an
Englishman may say: "The government is considering the matter itself or "The government are considering
the matter themselves". However, only the first expression can be accepted by the Americans. The second ex-
pression sounds odd to them.

Similarly, the syntactic differences between British English and American English are particularly
noticed in the expression of time.

For example:

American English: 'five after eight'
British English: 'five past eight'.

One more difference lies in the use of the preposition after the verb 'different'. In American English,
'than' is used but in British English, 'from' or 'to' is used.

For example:

American English: Their house is different than ours.
British English: Their house is different from ours.

Another area in which the Americans have left their mark is vocabulary. When the settlers arrived from
far-flung places, they were left with little option but to invent new words such as divide, gap, watershed,
fothill, bluff and a whole range of similar terms. Many words were borrowed from the local Red Indian
population, like raccoon, moose, skunk, chipmunk; some were bizarre coinages, bullfrog, groundhog,
gartersnake, reid bird, woodchuck, mush'rat, squash, quahog, wigwam, Chinook, hooch, rotem, etc.

However, what strikes one is the typical American preference for certain other set of words, for instance,
the British luggage becomes baggage in American, a lift is an elevator and the liftboy is elevator operator. A
timetables is a schedule, inquiry office is information bureau; British braces become suspenders in America,
Chemist's shop is a drugstore, goodswaggon is freight car, sweets is candy, lorry is truck, spanner is monkey
wrench, to ring is to call, tin is can, etc.
In addition, some words have developed additional or different connotations in American English. For example, *homely* means in British English *domestic* or *down to earth*, in American English it is 'ugly'; pavement means 'footpath' in England while in U.S. it signifies 'road surface'. By *dumb* the English mean *mute* for the American it denotes *stupid*; regular in English means 'constant', in American 'average' or 'normal', differences in meaning in some other words are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Common meaning</th>
<th>Additional American meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cute</td>
<td>endearing</td>
<td>attractive, charming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>fine, nice</td>
<td>valid (as of license, tickets, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ship</td>
<td>to transport by ship</td>
<td>to transport by ship, train, air or road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nerve</td>
<td>nervous</td>
<td>bold, cheeky</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another interesting aspect of the American English is that with regard to such collective nouns as *team, family, government,* etc. singular agreement and singular pronoun substitution is usually used. In British English such nouns fake the plural verb agreement and plural pronoun substitution. Regarding this practice, Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah say, 'There is a tendency in British English to stress the individuality of the members which is reflected in plural verb agreement and pronoun substitution, whereas U.S. English strongly tends to stress the unitary function of the group, which is reflected in singular verb and pronoun forms'. (Trudgill P. 60-61).

**British English:** Your team are doing well this year, aren't they?
**American English:** Your team is doing well this year, isn't it aren't they.

A more important difference is the greater clearness with which Americans pronounce unaccented syllables. They do not say *secret'ry* or *necess'ry*. Bernard Shaw said he once recognized an American because he accented the third syllable of necessary, and the disposition to keep a secondary stress on one of the unaccented syllables of a long word is one of the consequences of our effort to pronounce all the syllables. Conversely the suppression of syllables in Britain has been accompanied by a difference at times in the position of the chief stress. The British commonly say *centen'ary* and *labor'atory*, and *adver'tisement* is never *advertis'ment*. There is, of course, more in speech than the quality of the sounds. There is also the matter of pitch and tempo. Americans speak more slowly and with less variety of tone. There can be no gain saying the fact that American speech is a bit more monotonous, is uttered with less variety in the intonation, than that of Britain.

The following list shows the differences in the stress distribution pattern in both American and British English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>address</td>
<td>/ædres/</td>
<td>/əd rəs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult</td>
<td>/ædʌlt/</td>
<td>/ædʌlt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baton</td>
<td>/b ætən/</td>
<td>/b tən/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigarette</td>
<td>/ˈsɪgət/</td>
<td>/ˈsɪg t/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commentary</td>
<td>/ˈkəməntri/</td>
<td>/ˈkəməntri/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquiry</td>
<td>/ɪˈkwɔːri/</td>
<td>/ɪ kwori/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laboratory</td>
<td>/ˈlɑːbərəri/</td>
<td>/ˈlɑːbərəri/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>/ˈnɔrɪtʃ/</td>
<td>/ˈnɔrɪtʃ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>/pɔrˈstmɑːθ/</td>
<td>/pɔrˈstmɑːθ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>/rɪˈsɛrч/</td>
<td>/rɪˈsɛrч/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secretary</td>
<td>/ˈsɛkrətri/</td>
<td>/ˈsɛkrətri/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testimony</td>
<td>/ˈtɛstitəni/</td>
<td>/ˈtɛstitəni/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are other differences of less moment between English and American pronunciation, because they concern individual words or small groups of words. Thus in England *been* has the same sound as *bean* but in America is like *bin*. Leisure often has in America what is popularly called a long vowel but in England usually rhymes with *pleasure*. There, too, the last syllables of words like *fertile* and *sterile* rhymes with *aisle*. American English has kept the common eighteenth century pronunciation with a short vowel or a mere vocalic *l*. The British pronunciation of *either* and *neither* is sometimes heard in America, as is process with a
close o. But Americans do not suppress the final t in trait or pronounce an f in lieutenant.

Finally, in American English, unstressed syllables are pronounced with greater clarity as compared to the same in British English. In this way, there are minor but notable differences in pronunciation of the two varieties. The rhythm of general American speech shows characteristics of its own, connected with the treatment of unstressed and secondarily stressed syllables. A more even distribution of conspicuous syllables reflects an older pronunciation of many polysyllabic words.

In this way, American English has its own peculiarities or features, which differentiate it from British English. It is a fact that the literary languages of the United States of America and Great Britain are more or less the same. But there are remarkable differences between the two. They are in fact, the two national varieties of English.

References

This paper has been presented at the International Conference “SCIREPS EDUCATION FORUM” in Paris (April 25-30, 2015).