

## AMERICAN ENGLISH AND BRITISH ENGLISH COMPARED

*S.A. Rudacovskaya, Ch.A. Korobeiko, 1<sup>st</sup> year of studies*  
*Scientific supervisor – E.A. Rybchinskaya*  
*Polessky State University*

It is over half a century already that the nature of the two main variants of the English language, British and American has been discussed. Some linguists regard the language of the USA as a dialect of English. Other linguists speak of two separate languages with a steady flood of linguistic influence first (up to about 1914) from Britain to America, and since then from America to the British Isles. They even proclaim that the American influence on British English is so powerful that there will come a time when the American standard will be established in Britain.

It is not surprising – approximately two thirds of native speakers of English live in the U.S. Cooperation between the USA and other countries is increasing from day to day. American English integrates in every side of our life. The USA presents us its culture through movies, music, advertisement, business. All these aspects are reflected in the language, the mirror of the culture. American English has its own special peculiarities, which distinguish it from other variants of the English language.

The most obvious and representative differences between British English (BE) and American English (AE) include differences in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling [3].

#### 1. Differences in American and English Vocabulary

It's not difficult to distinguish between the American Vocabulary and the English one. Many of these differences are merely a matter of preference: Americans prefer *railroad* and *store* while the English prefer the synonyms *railway* and *shop*, but these four words are used in both England and America. Americans know or can easily guess what *braces*, *fishmonger's*, or *pram* means, just as the English know or can figure out what *jump rope* and *ice water* mean. Finally, many of the words that once separated AE from BE no longer do: American *cocktail*, *skyscraper*, and *supermarket* are now heard around the world, and the English increasingly use *radio*, *run* (in a stocking), and *Santa Claus* instead of *wireless*, *ladder*, and *Father Christmas*. The following examples may especially interest tourists and those who enjoy both American and English books and movies: *athlete* in BE is one who participates in track and field events whereas *athlete* in AE is one who participates in sport in general;

*Rubber* in BE is a tool to erase pencil markings; *rubber* in AE is a condom [2].

Both languages have a slightly different structure of telling the time. While the British would say *quarter past ten* to denote 10:15, it is not uncommon in America to say *quarter after* or even *a quarter past ten* [2].

There are also a few differences in preposition use including the following:

(AE) *on the weekend*, (BE) *at the weekend*; (AE) *on a team*, (BE) *in a team*; (AE) *please write me soon*, (BE) *please write to me soon* [3].

#### 2. Differences in American and English Grammar

These include differences in use of tenses. In British English the present perfect is used to express an action that has occurred in the recent past that has an effect on the present moment. For example: *I've lost my keys. Can you help me find them?* In AE, the use of the past tense is also permissible: *I misplaced my pen. Can you help me find it?* In British English, however, using the past tense in this example would be considered incorrect.

Other differences in the use of the present perfect in British English and simple past in AE include the words *already*, *just* and *yet*.

(BE) *I've just had food. Have you finished your homework yet?*

(AE) *I just had food. OR I've just had food. I've already seen that film. OR I already saw that film* [2].

Past perfect, as a rule, is not used completely [4].

A base verb in American and British English is also used in different ways. For example for the verb *to dream*, Americans would use the past tense *dreamed* while the British would use *dreamt*. The same applies to *learned* and *learnt*. Another example of differing past tense spellings for verbs in American and British English is *forecast*. Americans use *forecast* while the British would say *forecasted* in simple past tense [2].

There are some words which belong to countable in AE and but in BE they are considered to be uncountable. The most common of them are accommodation and research. Another examples:

(AE) *The number/amount of hotel accommodations is increasing;*

(BE) *The number/amount of hotel accommodation is increasing.*

(AE) *The official researches carried out...*

(BE) *The official research carried out...*

In BE, there are some words which can be used with a singular or plural verb while in AE, they are always used with a singular verb: *army, committee, crowd, family, management, party, the public, team, union*, etc.

Adjectives and adverbs. In negative sentences, Americans tend to use *too* where Englishmen use *very*.

(AE) *I don't like it too much.*

(BE) *I don't like it very much.*

Americans use the word *slow* as an adverb;

(AE) *He likes to drive slow.*

(BE) *He likes to drive slowly.*

*Sure* often means *certainly* in an informal style in AB:

"May I use your telephone, please?" "Sure."

In informal AE, *really* is often replaced by *real* before adverbs and adjectives, e.g. *It is real nice; real well*.

In BE, such position of adverbs is used for emphasis [4].

### 3. Differences in American and English Pronunciation

The major difference in American and English pronunciation is in intonation and voice timbre. Americans speak with less variety of tone than the English. American voice timbre seems harsh or tinny to the English, theirs – gurgling or throaty to Americans. The English perceive American speech as shrill and monotonous, while Americans conclude that the English speak too low, theatrically, and swallow their syllables.

The more precise differences include:

Americans do not "swallow" the sound [r]. For example, the British pronounce the word *car* [ka:], and Americans – [ka:r]. In British pronunciation this sound is pronounced only if it is followed by a vowel, as, for example in *red*, or if it stands at the end of a word and the next word begins with a vowel (for example, *far away*) [1].

Americans pronounce the *a* in such words as *ask, brass, can't, dance, fast, grass, half, last*, and *path* as a short [æ]; the English pronounce it more as the broad [a:] in *father*.

And some are just unique pronunciations of individual words. Such miscellaneous differences in pronunciations include: *ate*, Americans say [eit] – [et] is an accepted English pronunciation; *been*, Americans say [bin] – the English say [bi:n]; *either, neither*, most Americans say as [eðer], [neðer] – [i:ðer], [ni:ðer] is the English variant; *issue*, Americans say [iʃju:] the – English say [isju:]; *leisure*, most Americans say [leɪʒə] – the English say [leiʒə]; *nephew*, Americans say [nefju:] – the English say [nevju:]; *schedule*, Americans say [skedju:l] – the English say [ʃedju:l].

In conclusion it is worth mentioning that no one wants to be accused of ambiguity and obscurity, or find themselves talking or writing at cross-purposes. The more we know about the language the more

chances we have to succeed, whether we are advertisers, politicians, priests, journalists, doctors, lawyers – or just ordinary people at home, trying to understand and be understood.

### **Literature reference**

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