MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND SECONDARY SPECIAL EDUCATION

OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

GULISTAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The English and Literature Department

Qualification work on speciality English philology

on the theme:

## “Differences between American English and British English”

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Gulistan 2008

**I. Introduction**

**1.1 General American**

In the early part of the seventeenth century English settlers began to bring their language to America, and another series of changes began to take place. The settlers borrowed words from Indian languages for such strange trees as the hickory and persimmon, such unfamiliar animals as raccoons and woodchucks. Later they borrowed other words from settlers from other countries – for instance, chowder and prairie from the French, scow and sleigh from the Dutch. They made new combinations of English words, such as backwoods and bullfrog, or gave old English words entirely new meanings, such as lumber (which in British English means approximately junk) and corn (which in British means any grain, especially wheat). Some of the new terms were needed, because there were new and un-English things to talk about. Others can be explained only on the general theory that languages are always changing, and American English is no exception.

Aside from the new vocabulary, differences in pronunciation, in grammatical construction, and especially in intonation developed. If the colonization had taken place a few centuries earlier, American might have become as different from English as French is from Italian. But the settlement occurred after the invention of printing, and continued through a period when the idea of educating everybody was making rapid progress. For a long time most of the books read in America came from England, and a surprising number of Americans read those books, in or out of school. Moreover, most of the colonists seem to have felt strong ties with England. In this they were unlike their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who apparently made a clean break with their continental homes. The problem of the theme is that the problem of the theme is that: A good many Englishmen and some Americans used to condemn every difference that did develop, and as recently as a generation ago it was not unusual to hear all “Americanisms” condemned, even in America. It is now generally recognized in this country that we are not bound to the Queen’s English, but have a full right to work out our own habits. Even a good many of the English now concede this, though some of them object strongly to the fact that Americanisms are now having an influence on British usage.

The aim of the theme is to study deeply the differences of American and British English. There are thousands of differences in detail between British and American English, and occasionally they crowd together enough to make some difficulty. If you read that a man, having trouble with his lorry, got out his spanner and lifted the bonnet to see what was the matter, you might not realize that the driver of the truck had taken out his wrench and lifted the hood. It is amusing to play with such differences, but the theory that the American language is now essentially different from English does not hold up. It is often very difficult to decide whether a book was written by an American or an English man. Even in speech it would be hard to prove that national differences are greater than some local differences in either country. On the whole, it now seems probable that the language habits of the two countries will grow more, rather than less, alike, although some differences will undoubtedly remain and others may develop.

It also seems probable that there will be narrow-minded and snobbish people in both countries for some time to come. But generally speaking, anybody who learnsto speak and write the standard English of his own country, and to regard that of the other country as a legitimate variety with certain interesting differences, will have little trouble wherever he goes. General American—like the British Received Pronunciation as well as most standard language varieties of many other societies—was never the accent of the entire nation. Rather, it is most closely related to a generalized Midwestern accent and is spoken particularly by many newscasters, in part because the national broadcasters preferred to hire people who exhibited similar speech. Famous news anchor Walter Cronkite is a good example of a broadcaster using this accent. Since Cronkite was born in Missouri, and spent his first dozen years there, some assumed that General American was the regional accent of the state, although Cronkite's teen years were spent in Texas, which is not known for having "accentless" speakers. General American is sometimes promoted as preferable to other regional accents; in the United States, classes promising "accent reduction" generally attempt to teach speech patterns similar to this accent.

The well-known television journalist Linda Ellerbee, who worked hard early in her career to eliminate a Texas accent, stated, "in television you are not supposed to sound like you're from anywhere." Some sources[attribution needed][[1]](#footnote-1) suggest this is less true today than it was formerly. GeneralAmerican is also the accent generally taught to individuals from other countries learning English as a second language in the United States, as well as outside the country to anyone who wishes to learn "American English."

**II. Main part**

**2.1 Pronunciation symbols**

The symbols used to render pronunciations are those that are used in The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition (1992). These symbols are phonemic rather than phonetic. That is, they are designed to help you distinguish meaningful units of sound, such as the difference between cat and cad or pat and pet. They are not designed to represent the specific pronunciation of any individual or of any particular speech community. Thus they allow people from different speech communities to pronounce words correctly in their native dialect. In the discussions that follow, the term long vowel can refer to any of the following sounds: ( ), ( ), ( ), ( ), (ä), and ( ); it can also refer to the diphthongs (ou) and (oi). The term short vowel can refer to any of these sounds: ( ), ( ), ( ), ( ), ( ), and ( ). A full pronunciation key can be found at Pronunciation Symbols.

1. a

2. aberrant

3. acumen

4. -ade

5. aerate

6. affluence affluent

7. -age

8. agoraphobia

9. ague

10. albumen albumin

11. alms

12. alumni alumnae

13. analogous

14. anesthetist

15. angina

16. Antarctic

17. apartheid

18. aplomb

19. arctic / Arctic

20. argot

21. ask

22. assimilation

23. asterisk

24. athlete

25. auxiliary

26. banal

27. barbiturate

28. blackguard

29. boatswain

30. bogeyman

31. bouquet

32. bowline

33. breeches

34. brooch

35. bulimia

36. buoy

37. C

38. cabal

39. cache

40. cadre

41. catacomb

42. Celt / Celtic

43. centenary

44. cerebral

45. Ch

46. choleric

47. clique

48. clothes

49. colander

50. comptroller

51. conch

52. coupon

53. covert

54. culinary

55. dais

56. debacle

57. deify / deity

58. demagogic demagogy

59. despicable

60. desultory

61. diphtheria

62. diphthong

63. disastrous

64. disparate

65. dissect

66. dissimilation

67. doughty

68. dour

69. dwarf

70. ebullience ebullient

71. -ed

72. either

73. envelope

74. environment

75. epoch

76. err

77. escalator

78. escape

79. espresso / expresso

80. et cetera

81. exquisite

82. February

83. flaccid

84. forecastle

85. formidable

86. forte

87. fulminant fulminate

88. fulsome

89. fungi

90. G

91. genealogy

92. genuine

93. genus

94. gerrymander

95. gibberish

96. governor

97. grievous

98. gunwale

99. H

100. harass

101. hegemony

102. height

103. heinous

104. herb

105. hoof

106. hovel / hover

107. impious

108. inherence / inherent

109. integral

110. interest

111. intrusion

112. inveigle

113. jewelry

114. junta

115. juvenilia

116. kerchief

117. kilometer

118. kudos

119. L

120. lasso

121. leeward

122. leisure

123. length

124. library

125. lived

126. lower / lour

127. machinate

128. mainsail

129. mauve

130. mayoral

131. metathesis

132. millenary

133. mineralogy

134. mischievous

135. moot

136. mores

137. naphtha naphthalene

138. neither

139. niche

140. nuclear

141. often

142. ophthalmia

143. -or

144. panegyric

145. penalize

146. poinsettia

147. portentous

148. posthumous

149. potpourri

150. primer

151.pronunciation spelling

152. prosody

153. pumpkin

154. quark

155. quasi

156. quay

157. quixotic

158. ration

159. Realtor

160. remonstrate

161. renaissance Renaissance

162. renege

163. renown

164. ribald

165. roof

166. row

167. sarcophagi

168. scarify

169. schism

170. scone

171. secretive

172. sheik

173. shone

174. similar

175. sloth

176. sonorous

177. spelling pronunciation

178. spontaneity

179. strength

180. the

181. tomato

182. topgallant topmast topsail

183. trauma

184. troth

185. valet

186. vase

187. victual

188. whilst

189. wizen

190. Xmas

191. zoo- / zo-

**2.2 Pronunciation Challenges**

Pronunciation Challenges Confusions and Controversy Differences Between American and British English

While there are certainly many more varieties of English, American and British English are the two varieties that are taught in most ESL/EFL[[2]](#footnote-2) programs. Generally, it is agreed that no one version is "correct" however, there are certainly preferences in use. The most important rule of thumb is to try to be consistent in your usage. If you decide that you want to use American English spellings then be consistent in your spelling (i.e. The color of the orange is also its flavour - color is American spelling and flavour is British), this is of course not always easy - or possible. The following guide is meant to point out the principal differences between these two varieties of English.

**2.2.1 Use of the Present Perfect**

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 key. Can you help me look for it?

In American English the following is also possible:

I lost my key. Can you help me look for it?

In British English the above would be considered incorrect. However, both forms are generally accepted in standard American English. Other differences involving the use of the present perfect in British English and simple past in American English include already, just and yet.

British English:

I've just had lunch

I've already seen that film

Have you finished your homework yet?

American English:

I just had lunch OR I've just had lunch

I've already seen that film OR I already saw that film.

Have your finished your homework yet? OR Did you finish your homework yet?

**2.2.2 Possession**

There are two forms to express possession in English. Have or Have got

Do you have a car?

Have you got a car?

He hasn't got any friends.

He doesn't have any friends.

She has a beautiful new home.

She's got a beautiful new home.

While both forms are correct (and accepted in both British and American English), have got (have you got, he hasn't got, etc.) is generally the preferred form in British English while most speakers of American English employ the have (do you have, he doesn't have etc.)[[3]](#footnote-3)

**2.2.3 The Verb Get**

The past participle of the verb get is gotten in American English. Example He's gotten much better at playing tennis. British English - He's got much better at playing tennis.

**2.2.4 Vocabulary**

Probably the major differences between British and American English lies in the choice of vocabulary. Some words mean different things in the two varieties for example:

Mean: (American English - angry, bad humored, British English - not generous, tight fisted)

Rubber: (American English - condom, British English - tool used to erase pencil markings)

There are many more examples (too many for me to list here). If there is a difference in usage, your dictionary will note the different meanings in its definition of the term. Many vocabulary items are also used in one form and not in the other. One of the best examples of this is the terminology used for automobiles.

American English - hood British English - bonnet

American English - trunk British English - boot

American English - truck British English - lorry

Once again, your dictionary should list whether the term is used in British English or American English.

For a more complete list of the vocabulary differences between British and American English use this British vs. American English vocabulary tool.

**2.2.5 Prepositions**

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

American English - on the weekend British English - at the weekend

American English - on a team British English - in a team

American English - please write me soon British English - please write to me soon

**2.2.6 Past Simple/Past Participles**

The following verbs have two acceptable forms of the past simple/past participle in both American and British English, however, the irregular form is generally more common in British English (the first form of the two) and the regular form is more common to American English.

Burn Burnt OR burned

Dream dreamt OR dreamed

Lean leant OR leaned

Learn learnt OR learned

Smell smelt OR smelled

Spell spelt OR spelled

Spill spilt OR spilled

Spoil spoilt OR spoiled

**2.2.7 Spelling**

Here are some general differences between British and American spellings:

Words ending in -or (American) -our (British) color, color, humor, humor, flavor, flavor etc.

Words ending in -ize (American) -ise (British) recognize, recognize, patronize, patronize etc.

**3.2 Differences between standard British English and standard American English**

**3.2.1 Lexical difference**

Lexical differences of American variant highly extensive on the strength of multiple borrowing from Spanish and Indian languages, what was not in British English.

American variant British variant

Subway «метро» underground

the movies «кинотеатр» the cinema

shop «магазин» store

sidewalk «тротуар» pavement

line «очередь» queue

soccer «футбол» football

mailman «почтальон» postman

vacation «каникулы» holiday

corn «кукуруза» maize

fall «осень» autumn

Also claim attention differences in writing some words in American and British variants of language.

For instance, following:

American variant British variant

honor honor

traveler traveler

plow plough

defense defense

jail goal

center centre

apologize apologies

**3.2.2 Grammatical difference**

Grammatical differences of American variant consist in following:

1. In that events, when Britannia’s use Present Perfect, in Staffs can be used and Present Perfect, and Past Simple.

2. Take a shower/a bath instead of have a shower/a bath.

3. Shall is not used. In all persons is used by will.

4. Needn't (do) usually is not used. Accustomed form -don't need to (do).

5. After demand, insist, require etc should usually is NOT used. I demanded that he apologize (instead of I demanded that he should apologies in British variant).

6. to/in THE hospital instead of to/in hospital in BE.

7. on the weekend/on weekend instead of at the weekend/at weekend.

8. on a street instead of in a street.

9. Different from or than instead of different to/from

10. Write is used with to or without the pretext.

11. Past participle of "got" is "gotten"

12. To burn, to spoil and other verbs, which can be regular or irregular in the British variant, in the American variant ALWAYS regular.

13. Past Perfect, as a rule, is not used completely.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The best way to make sure that you are being consistent in your spelling is to use the spell check on your word processor (if you are using the computer of course) and choose which variety of English you would like. As you can see, there are really very few differences between standard British English and standard American English. However, the largest difference is probably that of the choice of vocabulary and pronunciation. For further information concerning these areas please refer to the following links below.

American English has grown steadily in international significance since World War II, parallel to the growth of U.S. political, economic, technological and cultural influence worldwide. American English is currently the dominant influence on "world English" (cf. British English) largely due to the following:

1. Wealth of the U.S. economy vs. the U.K., & influences

2. Magnitude of higher education in America vs the U.K.

3. Magnitude of the publishing industry in America

4. Magnitude of global mass media and media technology influence

5. Appeal of American popular culture on language and habits

6. International political and economic position of the U.S. (cf. Kennedy)

American and British English are both variants of World English. As such, they are more similar than different, especially with "educated" or "scientific" English. Most divergence can be ascribed to differing national histories and cultural development (cf. Are Americans Ruining English? [PBS]), and the way in which the two national variants have changed correspondingly.

The following general categories of difference between standard American English (SAE) and standard British English (SBE) each have their own socialistic value:

**3.2.3 Punctuation**

• Date writing, number/word order (never use only numbers!)

• Use of commas and periods inside quotation marks

• Business letter salutations, colons vs commas

Grammar

• His daughter was a thespian who matriculated at the state college. She came to the party with a homo sapiens! The dean said he was an extrovert. He masticated throughout the meal.

The R is a consonant, but it acts more like a vowel, because the tip of the tongue doesn't touch anywhere in the mouth. The middle T is what makes a word like meeting sound like meeting. As the most commonly used word in English is the word that is very important. Here are some very high-frequency. The words: the, these, those, they, them, there, they're, their, this, that and then. If these and those are pronounced with a D instead of a TH, it sounds like dese and dose, which is considered lower class in America.

**4.2 Sound system**

**4.2.1 Voiced and unvoiced consonants**

If you want to master English pronunciation you have to able to distinguish between these two types of consonants. This is necessary for you to learn the proper pronunciation when you learn new vocabulary. And more importantly you need to know the difference between voiced and unvoiced consonants to be able to pronounce the words of English correctly. What makes one consonant be voiced and another not?

A consonant is voiced when it makes the vocal cords vibrate. It is voiceless when it is pronounced without vibrating the vocal cords.

The sound of the letters "p" and "b"

For example, the sounds indicated by the letters "b" and "p" differ only in their vocalization (voicing). The are both "bilabials", that is, they are produced by closing both lips. But the "b" is voiced and the "p" is unvoiced. In this article, we will follow common practice and indicate the letters of the alphabet with quotes ("b" and "p") and the sounds with slashes (/b/ and /p/)

You can appreciate the difference by lightly touching with the tips of your fingers your "Adam's Apple" (the voice box that you can see in the front of your throat) as you pronounce the word bowl . You can feel the vibration with the tips of our fingers. Concentrate on the first sound, the consonant /b/ before passing to the vowel represented by the "o". Notice that you can lengthen the sound (something is heard!) without the "o". This is because /b/ is a voiced consonant. Now pronounce the word pole. Do you feel the vibration in the vocal cords? No.

The reason is that /p/ is an unvoiced consonant. Notice that you can't lengthen the sound or hear anything.

When you pronounce these sounds, don't forget the advice we already gave you in other articles: exaggerate the value of the vowel "o" with a strong English accent!

Listen to the following exercise until you can distinguish betwen the two sounds and produce them yourself.

You should be able to telll the difference between the /p/ and the /b/ in the sentence The doctor said: "Bill, take your pill!

Try it now!

The sounds of the English letters /k/ (sometimes "c") and /g/

It is not only the sounds /p/ and /b/ that are voiced or unvoiced. The same distinction holds for the sounds represented by the letters "k" y "g" in the International Phonetic Alphabet. By the way, do you see that it will not be hard for you to learn the symbols of the IPA? Many of the symbols, like the k and the g are already familiar to you. They are the normal letters of the alphabet.

The IPA symbol k interests us now. It is the "hard" sound of the letter "c", the sound that the letter "c" usually takes before the letters "a", "o", and "u", for example in the words car, coat, cube.

Now can you see how the IPA system makes it easy for you to learn the pronunciation of new words? Now, we don't have to worry that sometimes the letter "c" has the sound of the IPA symbol k (as in the word cold) or that sometimes the same letter "c" of the English alphabet is pronounced as the IPA s (as in the words cell ).

Now try to feel in your voice box the vibration in the word coal! You can't because it is the unvoiced partner in the pair. If you touch your voice box while you pronounce the word goal, you do feel the vibration because the sound g is voiced.

Practice the two words coal and goal. But keep on pronouncing the the English vowel with its lengthening. Exaggerate the English language character of the vowel. Don't pronounce it as if it were col or gol in your language. And also remember the explosive nature of the consonant represented by the "c" in English when it is pronounced as the IPA k. Blow out the candle when you say coal.

Pero... ¡Qué no suene como si hablaras de repollo (la col en el Perú) o del fútbol (el gol)! Cuidado con tu acento hispano!

Did you notice that we review various important things about the English sounds as we move along in this book. From now on, in your listening and in your practice, you must remember the explosive consonants, the special English vowels, and the voiced or unvoiced consonants.

The sound of the letters "t" and "d"

Consider the pair of words tear and dear. Do the same with these words as you did above with the pairs of words coal and goal, and pole and bowl. Can you distinguish which of the initial sounds is voiced and which is unvoiced? Both are pronounced in almost the same place in the mouth but the initial sound of these two words is different in that the letter "t" is usually voiceless and the "d" is usually voiced. However, do NOT think that the letter "d" in English is always voiced. You will see that sometimes this letter "d" represents a voiceless sound. This is a VERY important lesson in the pronunciation of English and when you learn how and when the "d" is unvoiced it will be a valuable tool for you in your mastery of English[[5]](#footnote-5).

This difference between the letters "d" and "t" in English is very important in the matter of the past tense of verbs. We will treat this elsewhere.

Also there is another pair of voiced and unvoiced consonants, the sounds represented in English by the letters "s" and "z". We will study them in their most important contexts, that of the third person singular of the present of verbs, and that of the plural of nouns.

But for now, concentrate on the consonants we just looked at.

Now listen and practice! Listen wherever you can (or listen in our book) to the different pairs of voiced and unvoiced consonants. Then make them yourself.

P and B

K and G

T and D

**4.2.2 The American R**

The American R is like a vowel because it does not touch anywhere in the mouth. In Korean, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Greek and many other languages, the R is a consonant because it touches behind the teeth. The American R is produced deep in the throat. Like the French R and the German R, the American R is in the throat, but unlike those two consonant sounds, it doesn't touch. Let's contrast two similar sounds: [ä] and [r]. Hold your hand out in front of you, with your palm up, like you are holding a tray on it. Slightly drop your hand down, and say ah, like you want the doctor to see your throat. Now, curl your fingers up slightly, and say [r]. Your tongue should feel in about the same position as your hand.

**æ**

Let's start with the [æ] sound. Although it's not a common sound, [æ] is very distinctive to the ear, and is typically American. In the practice paragraph vowel chart, this sound occurs 5 times. As its phonetic symbol indicates, [æ] is a combination of [ä] + [e]. To pronounce it, drop your jaw down as if you were going to say [ä]; then from that position, try to say eh. The final sound is not two separate vowels, but rather the end result of the combination. It is very close to the sound that a goat makes: ma-a-a-ah!

If you find yourself getting too nasal with [æ], pinch your nose as you say it. Go to the practice paragraph and find the 5 [æ] sounds, including [æu] as in down or out.

**ä**

The [ä] sound is a more common sound than [æ]; you will find 10 such sounds in the practice paragraph. To pronounce [ä], relax your tongue and drop your jaw as far down as it will go. As a matter of fact, put your hand under your chin and say [mä], [pä], [tä], [sä]. Your hand should be pushed down by your jaw as it opens. Remember, it's the sound that you make when the doctor wants to see your throat.

**uh**

Last is the schwa, the most common sound in American English. When you work on the practice paragraph, depending on how fast you speak, how smoothly you make liaisons, how strong your intonation is, how much you relax your sounds, you will find from 50 to 75 schwas. Spelling doesn't help identify it, because it can appear as any one of the vowels, or a combination of them. It is a neutral vowel sound, uh. It is usually in an unstressed syllable, though it can be stressed as well.

Whenever you find a vowel that can be crossed out and its absence wouldn't change the pronunciation of the word, you have probably found a schwa: photography [f'tägr'fee] (the two apostrophes show the location of the neutral vowel sounds)[[6]](#footnote-6).

Because it is so common, however, the wrong pronunciation of this one little sound can leave your speech strongly accented, even if you Americanize everything else.

Remember, some dictionaries use two different written characters, the upside down e & [^] for the neutral uh sound, but for simplicity, we are only going to use the first one.

**Silent or Neutral?**

A schwa is neutral, but it is not silent. By comparison, the silent E at the end of a word is a signal for pronunciation, but it is not pronounced itself: code is [kod]. The E tells you to say an [o]. If you leave the E off, you have cod, [käd]. The schwa, on the other hand, is neutral, but it is an actual sound, uh. For example, you could also write photography as phuh-tah-gruh-fee.

The schwa is a neutral sound, (no distinctive characteristics), but it is the most common sound in the English language. To make the uh sound, put your hand on your diaphragm and push until a grunt escapes. Don't move your jaw, tongue or lips, just allow the sound to flow past your vocal cords. It should sound like uh, not ah.

Once you master the two sounds [æ] and uh, you will have an easier time pronouncing 'can' and 'can't'. In a sentence, the simple positive 'can' sound like [k'n]. The simple negative 'can't' sounds like [kæn(t)].

Intention Spelling Pronunciation

Positive I can do it. [I k'n do it.

Negative I can't do it. I kæn(t) do it.

Extra Positive I can do it. I kææn do it.

Extra Negative I can't do it. I kænt do it.

When we read the works of Shakespeare or other authors from centuries past, we are often struck by the peculiar ring of their language. It is undeniably

English, yet quite removed from the English we speak today. Clearly, the language has changed in the 400 hundred plus years since Shakespeare’s day. Less obvious is the fact that English continues to change. Like all living languages, English is continually changing as new words, pronunciations and grammatical structures arise and eventually supplement or replace old ones.

**5.2 Another set of “Ears”…**

The study of changes in pronunciation has been aided tremendously by technical innovations over the last few decades. Researchers used to gather information on pronunciation by conducting interviews in which they would ask about a particular word, listen to the response, and quickly jot down the way it was said.

The availability of high-quality, portable tape recorders has freed the researcher from needing to document pronunciations on the spot. Also, the great fidelity of the recordings and the ability to listen to a sample repeatedly has allowed linguists to document more subtle distinctions of sound. An even greater level of detail has been opened to researchers through the use of computerized spectrographic analysis.

**5.2.1 Spectrography**

Spectrography permits very fine- grained measurements of various parts of an acoustic signal. It allows, for example, a researcher interested in the positioning of vowels to document very slight shifts that might not be easily detected by the ear.

In American English, pronunciation is the most active arena for language change. Researchers have identified dozens of pronunciation changes underway in various parts of the country. To the casual observer it might be surprising to discover that different changes are happening within different regions. Surprising because this counters a common assumption that Americans are growing more similar in their speech as a result of greater mobility, easier communication and increased access to the mass media.

While it is true that some pronunciations associated with particular areas or dialects have been lost to larger trends, (for example, the speech of formerly isolated communities such as Ocracoke Island, N.C.,[[7]](#footnote-7) is losing some of it uniqueness), new pronunciation trends are also rising up, and continue to contribute to the diversity in American speech.

A sampling of modern American pronunciation trends includes:

**5.2.2 The Low-Back Merger**

A “merger” describes what happens when a distinction between two (or more) sounds is lost. The sounds essentially merge into a single sound. The Low-Back Merger blends two vowel sounds that are pronounced with the tongue positioned low and back in the mouth. The vowels are the “o” sound of cot (box, lot, job, Don, etc.) and the “au” sound of caught (fought, bought, off, dawn, etc.). Many Americans use the same vowel in all of these words, so for them cot and caught as well as Don and dawn, stock and stalk, and other pairs are homophones.

This merger is well established in western Pennsylvania and in eastern New England (and also interestingly, across most of Canada and Scotland) and has been in evidence for several generations. More recently, the merger has come to characterize the speech of the West; researchers identified it as a linguistic trend among young Californians some 30 years ago. Since then it has spread well beyond the Golden State and is heard almost everywhere west of the Mississippi in the speech of people under the age of 35. This suggests that the trend will continue — and that maintaining distinct vowel sounds in cot and caught, Don and dawn, etc. will eventually become a rarity in many parts of the U.S.

A merger describes what happens when a distinction between two (or more) sounds is lost

**5.2.3 The Northern Cities Shift**

When a vowel sound moves into another vowel’s territory, the result may be a merger —as when the sound of caught comes to be pronounced with the tongue in the same region of the mouth as for cot. In a different pattern, the movement of one vowel spurs a reactive movement in a neighboring vowel. As with strangers in an elevator, one vowel shifts to keep its distance when another enters the space.

These coordinated movements are heard in the Northern Cities Shift, which affects six different vowels, those appearing in caught, cot, cat, bit, bet and but. In this change, caught takes on a vowel similar to that originally used for cot. The cot vowel also shifts, becoming more like the vowel of cat. The vowel of cat takes a position closer to that ordinarily heard with bit and sometimes sounds like the “ea” in idea. Words like bit are pronounced with a vowel nearer to bet or even but whereas bet words have a vowel similar to that in cat or but, and the vowel but words comes to sound more like that of caught. When these changes are plotted according to the positioning of the tongue, the connections among them are clear and the shift resembles a clockwise rotation of the vowels in the mouth.

The Northern Cities Shift: These guide words are positioned to represent where in the mouth the tongue is placed for those vowel sounds. The arrows indicate the directions of change affecting the sounds.

The Northern Cities Shift gets its name from its association with the urban centers around the Great Lakes including Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cleveland and Buffalo. But pronunciations related to the shift are by no means restricted to city dwellers. The shift can be heard across a broad swath of the North from Upstate New York throughout the Great Lakes region and westward into Minnesota and the Dakotas. It’s not clear when the shift got its start.

While it did not begin to attract the attention of linguists until the late 1960s, it seems to have been active at least since the 1930s, possibly spreading westward from New York. Whatever its origins, the shift today seems to be actively spreading and should continue to add a distinctive flavor to the speech of the region.

**5.2.4 The Southern Shift**

A very different but equally complicated pattern of vowel changes is found in the South. Dubbed the Southern Shift, these changes affect seven vowels. Probably the best known is the pronunciation of the “long i” sound as “ah,” so that sighed sounds like sod, time like Tom, etc. Another element of the Southern Shift affects the vowel of tame, which comes to sound like that of time, and the apparently related change of the team vowel to resemble that of tame. The vowels of sit and set are also affected, becoming more like see it and say it. The other pieces in the Southern shift change the vowels of boot and boat. These vowels are traditionally pronounced with the tongue placed in the back of the mouth, but here they are made with the tongue more toward the front.

Elements of the Southern Shift can be heard in an area stretching from Virginia to northern Florida, westward across much of Texas, and northward to roughly the Ohio River. The evidence suggests the changes arose in the decades after the Civil War and became widespread during the 20th century. The shift now appears to be stable and may even be receding in use in some areas, especially in large cities. The shift’s future is unclear: It may eventually be lost from Southern speech although it seems more likely to survive especially if it comes to be more broadly associated with “true” Southern identity.

**5.2.5 The California Shift**

California is the home base of another vowel shift that bears some resemblance to both the Southern Shift and the Northern Cities Shift. In California, as in the South, the vowels of boot and boat are shifting forward in their articulation. This trend is extremely widespread in American English and is heard throughout the Midwest and West as well as the South. The California Shift resembles the Northern Cities Shift in the way that the vowel of bit comes to sound like bet while the vowel of bet sounds like bat. Not to be outdone, the vowel of bat takes on a “broad a” quality and sounds like the “a” of father.

These changes appear to be recent innovations in California speech; they came to the attention of researchers in the 1980s and today are heard primarily from younger speakers. It’s hard to know whether they will have staying power, but the linguistic facts suggest that they will spread in and beyond California. The changes affecting bit, bet, and bat appear to be a coordinated shift among vowel neighbors: bat moves out and bet moves into the position vacated by bat which leads bit to move into the position vacated by bet. The initiating step, the moving of bat, is made possible by a change discussed above, the Low-Back Merger. That merger opens some space next door to bat by collapsing the vowels of cot and caught.

It seems likely, then, that the bat-bet-bit chain reaction will eventually take place wherever the Low-Back Merger is found. Some support for this prediction is found in the fact that the bat-bet-bit changes are also heard in Canadian English, another dialect that has undergone the Low-Back Merger.

Betting/Batting/Bitting on the Future

Predicting whether a particular pronunciation change will endure is risky because these trends may be influenced by a wide range of social and linguistic factors. Nevertheless, the vowel shifts seem to have important factors working in their favor. First, they involve general categories of sound rather than individual words. All words with the same vowel as cot (box, lot, job, Don) are pronounced with a vowel closer to that of cat in the Northern Cities Shift, and all words with the vowel of tame (bake, late, Jane, day) take on a pronunciation closer to the vowel of time in the Southern Shift. In this sense these changes differ from cases limited to particular words such as the replacement of “Missour-uh” with “Missour-ee.”

It also bodes well for the future that for the most part these changes operate without attracting any special regional attention. The people whose speech is affected typically are unaware of the peculiarities in their pronunciation. Also, whereas pronunciations that deviate from national norms often acquire social stigma, as with “warsh” and “crick,” it’s not so for these vowel shifts. Many of them, especially the Low Back Merger and the Northern Cities Shift, can be heard in the broadcast media. The acceptability, or at least lack of stigma, related to these new pronunciation trends suggests that they will continue to spread.

Most of the action in the changing sound of American English is heard with vowels

As these examples reveal, most of the action in the changing sound of American English is heard with vowels. This reflects a general pattern in the history of the language: the consonants have been relatively stable, while the vowels have undergone great changes. One of the few major consonant changes affecting American English relates to r. American dialects have long differed over this consonant. In parts of the Northeast and the South, the r has traditionally been not fully articulated in words like art and door. This tendency is being reversed as some areas appear to be joining with the rest of r-pronouncing America. (New York City and the South seem to be moving in an{link dysa foughtj\_rful\_essay}Rful{/link}direction, while Boston seems to want to hold onto its traditional Rless style).

Over the last few decades, technical innovations such computerized spectrographic analysis (see box) have greatly aided the study of changes in pronunciation.

Studying ongoing changes can help us learn more about how English developed in the past and predict how it is likely to evolve in the future. Throughout its history, English has undergone changes similar to those heard today, but until recently linguists have been limited to the evidence of the written record in trying to understand the dynamics of the process. The methods used now expand our perspective on how and why English changes.

The detailed examination of differences in speech also has applications outside the field of linguistics. The ability of computers to recognize and understand natural human speech can be greatly enhanced by a fuller account of the rich variety of accents across the country.

Interpersonal connections that promote new pronunciations also influence other social behaviors

The study of pronunciation changes also can provide insight into how innovations of various types are spread. The networks of influence involved in the diffusion of, say, the Northern Cities Shift may also serve as conduits for other innovations such as new technology. Similarly, the interpersonal connections that promote new pronunciations also influence other social behaviors. An improved understanding of these connections might be useful to, for example, public health officials in disseminating information about disease, child safety, etc.

Changes such as those described here have had and will continue to have a significant impact on the sound of American English. For linguists studying such changes, this is an exciting time. Research into these developments brings a greater understanding of how language functions and the vital role it plays in our dynamic and diverse society

Matthew J. Gordon is assistant professor of English at the University of Missouri - Columbia. He has a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Michigan. His research specializes in sociolinguistics and American dialectology. His book Small-Town Values, Big-City Vowels (Duke University Press, 2001) is a study of the Northern Cities Shift in Michigan. He is also co-author with Lesley

Milroy of Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation (Blackwell, 2003), a book that presents an overview of current practices in the field of sociolinguistics. He is currently studying sound changes in the state of Missouri.

**6.2 Are Americans Ruining English?**

For more than 200 years, right up through Prince Charles, people have complained that Americans trash the English language. But is it corruption — or simply normal change? John Algeo investigates how both American and British English’s have evolved. (The research in this essay was first published in 1999.)

America is ruining the English language – everyone knows that. We have heard it from early days right up to the present. We have heard it from English men and English women, of course, but from Americans as well – self-confessed linguistic vandals. We have heard it from the famous and the obscure. So it must be true. But in what does the ruination lie? How are Americans ruining English?

In the early days, British travelers in the American colonies often commented on the ‘purity’ of the English spoken in the new world. It wasn’t until the American impertinence of 1776 that Americans seem to have begun ruining English. Yet, as early as 1735, a British traveler in Georgia, Francis Moore, described the town of Savannah: ‘It is about a mile and a quarter in circumference; it stands upon the flat of a hill, the bank of the river (which they in barbarous English call a bluff) is steep.’ The Americans had taken an adjective of nautical and perhaps Dutch origin, meaning ‘broad, flat and steep’, to use as a noun for the sort of river bank that hardly existed in England and for which, consequently, earlier English had no name.

**6.2.1 American English is ‘very corrupting’**

In 1995, in much the same vein as the comment of 260 years earlier, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was reported by The Times as complaining to a British Council audience that American English is ‘very corrupting.’ Particularly, he bemoaned the fact that ‘people tend to invent all sorts of nouns and verbs and make words that shouldn’t be.’ By this time the barbarous use of bluff for a steep bank had been civilized by being adopted into the usage of the motherland, but doubtless if the Prince had lived about nine generations earlier, he would have agreed with Francis Moore that bluff was a word that shouldn’t be.

The Prince concluded: ‘We must act now to insure that English – and that, to my way of thinking, means English – maintains its position as the world language well into the next century." His concern seems to be as much commercial as merely ethnocentrically aesthetic, the English language being one of England’s most popular exports, along with gossip about the escapades of the Royals. The Prince, after all, was only doing his bit to keep the English pecker up.

One way Americans are ruining English is by changing it. Many of us, like Francis Moore and Prince Charles, regard what is foreign to us as barbarous and corrupt. We owe the term barbarous to the Greeks; they pitied the poor foreigner who could only stammer ‘bar-bar’ and hence was a ‘barbaros’. Barbarians are simply those who do not talk as we do, whether they are outsiders, Yanks or fellow countrymen and countrywomen whose style we do not admire.

The journalist Edwin Newman is a linguistic prophet who sees the language style of his fellow Americans as deadly. In 1974 he vaticinator in a book called Strictly Speaking, which was subtitled Will America be the Death of English? In it, he too objected to the invention of all sorts of nouns and verbs and words that shouldn’t be. In particular he objected to verbosity and euphemism as bad style. A number of Americans bemoan the baleful influence of their fellow citizens on the health or integrity of the language, but only a few, like Edwin Newman, have been able to make a career of it.

In England, on the other hand, a perception that America is ruining the language pervades the discourse of the chattering classes. Indeed, a fair number of British intellectuals regard ‘new’, ‘distasteful’, and ‘American’ as synonymous. A knowledgeable British author complained about the supposedly American pronunciation controversy and was surprised to hear that the antepenult accent is unknown in the States, being a recent British innovation. The assumption is that anything new is American and thus objectionable on double grounds.

Change in language is, however, inevitable, just as it is in all other aspects of reality. Particular changes will be, in the eyes of one observer or another, improvements or degenerations. But judgements of what is beautiful or ugly, valuable or useless, barbarous or elegant, corrupting or improving are highly personal idiosyncratic ones.

There are no objective criteria for judging worth in language, no linguistic Tables of the Law, no archetypical authority called ‘The Dictionary’, though there are wannabe authoritarians aplenty.

A language - or anything else that does not change - is dead

On the other hand, no one is required to like all or any particular changes. It is, in the great Anglo-American tradition, our God-given right to have our own opinions and to take it or leave it when it come to style in couture, diet, entertainment, religion and language. We need not be equally enthusiastic about catsuits and muu-muus, macrobiotics, and haute cuisine, grunge rock and Philip Glass, the World Wide Web and MTV, bank and bluff or controversy and controversy. We don’t have to like particular changes, or even the fact of change itself. But a language or anything else that does not change is dead.

The eighteenth-century hope that language could be ‘fixed’ – that is, improved, or changed in a way some self-appointed linguistic judge would approve of until it reached a state of perfection and then preserved so that it would not thereafter degenerate or change in a way the judge disliked – was a chimera. It was an illusion based on misunderstandings about the nature of language, values and human nature.

The earliest English we can catch sight of in manuscripts of the seventh century was the product of millennia of change. We can only reconstruct its earlier history back through stages we call Anglo-Frisian, Germanic, Indo-European, and maybe even Nostratic and Proto-World. During the recorded history of English, the language has changed from something quite incomprehensible to a present-day English speaker, which we call Old English (Hwaet! We Gar-dena in geordagum the odcyninge thrym gehyrdon) to something equally incomprehensible to many of us, computer speak (Some memory resident programs steal too much of the CPU to work with an asynchronous download).

During its roughly thirteen centuries of recorded history, English has diversified in many ways. Any two varieties of a language become increasingly different from each other when their speakers do not communicate with one other but more alike as those who use them talk among themselves. That is the way language works.

British and American started to become different when English speakers first set foot on American soil because the colonists found new things to talk about and also because they ceased to talk regularly with the people back home. The colonists changed English in their own unique way, but at the same time speakers in England were changing the language too, only in a different way from that of the colonists. As a result, over time the two varieties became increasingly different, not so radically different that they amounted to different languages, as Italian and French had become a millennium earlier, but different enough to notice.

The differences between American and British are not due to Americans changing from a British standard. American is not corrupt British plus barbarisms. Rather, both American and British evolved in different ways from a common sixteenth-century ancestral standard. Present-day British is no closer to that earlier form than present-day American is. Indeed, in some ways present-day American is more conservative, that is, closer to the common original standard than is present-day British.

Americans generally retain the r-sound in words like more and mother, whereas the British have lost it

Some examples of American conservatives versus British innovation are these: Americans generally retain the r-sound in words like more and mother, whereas the British have lost it. Americans generally retain the ‘flat a’ of cat in path, calf, class,whereas the British have replaced it with the ‘broad a’ of father. Americans retain a secondary stress on the second syllable from the end of words like secretary and dictionary, whereas the British have lost both the stress and often the vowel, reducing the words to three syllables, ‘secret’ry’. Americans retain an old use of the verb guess to mean ‘think’ or ‘suppose’ (as in Geoffrey Chaucer’s catch-phrase ‘I gesse’). Americans have retained the past participle form gotten beside got, whereas the British have lost the former. (The British often suppose that Americans use only gotten, in fact they use both, but with different meanings: ‘I’ve got a cold’ = ‘I have a cold’ and ‘I’ve gotten a cold’ = ‘I’ve caught a cold’). Americans retain use of the subjunctivein what grammarians call ‘mandative’ expressions: ‘They insisted that he leave,’ whereas the British substituted for it other forms, such as ‘that he should leave’ or ‘that he left’.

On the other hand, the British are more conservative than Americans in other ways. Thus, they continue to distinguish atom (with a t-sound) and Adam (with a d-sound), whereas Americans typically pronounce the two words alike, with a flap sound that is more d- than t-like. Similarly, in standard British callous and Alice do not rhyme, whereas they usually do in standard American, both having a schwa. So too, the British have different stressed vowels in father and fodder, whereas Americans pronounce those words with the same first vowel. The British have retained an old use of reckon in the sense ‘think’ or ‘suppose’in serious discourse, whereas that use in America is old-fashioned or rural, a comic marker of ‘hick’ talk. The British have retained the term fortnight, whereas Americans have lost it. The British have retained the primary meaning of corn as ‘grain’, whereas Americans have changed it to ‘maize’ (the image many Americans have of ‘Ruth amid the alien corn’ being both anachronistic and ectopic). The British have retained the inversion of have with its subject in questions: ‘Have you the time?’ whereas Americans use the auxiliary verb do with it: ‘Do you have the time?’

On balance, it is hard to say which variety of English, American or British, is the more conservative and which the more innovative. A lot depends on how you look at the question. It is clear that the British are keen on (Americans would say ‘fond of’) the pluperfect, whereas Americans prefer the simple past: British ‘He had left before they arrived’ versus typical American ‘He left before they arrived.’ But it is less clear which usage should be regarded as older. Is the American preference a degeneration of the tense system? Or a preservation of the English of the Anglo-Saxons, who had little truck with complex tenses?

Both American and British have changed and go on changing

Both American and British have changed and go on changing today. Among recent innovations in British English, in addition to the pronunciation of controversy already cited, are such vocabulary novelties as gazumping and gazundering, Essex man and Estuary English, toy boy, and redundancy for ‘sacking’ or ‘firing’ (a bureaucratic euphemism fit to exercise the spleen of a British Edwin Newman). Paralleling the American retention of the mandative subjunctive (‘They insisted that he leave’) is a British innovative use of the indicative in such expressions: ‘They insisted that he left,’ which in American use could only be a statement of fact (‘They insisted it was a fact that he had left’).

British speakers have also been extraordinary fertile in expanding the range of use for tag questions. Tag questions are little bobs at the end of sentences that can turn them into questions, or sometimes into something else. The basic tag questions are general English, shared by British and American:

informational: ‘You don’t wear glasses, do you?’ (I’m not sure, but think you don’t. Am I right?)

inclusive: ‘It’s a nice day, isn’t it?’(It obviously is – I’m not really asking, but just making polite remarks so you can join in the conversation).

emphasizing: ‘I made a bad mistake, didn’t I?’ (This is a soliloquy. I’m not talking to anybody but myself and don’t expect an answer to the rhetorical question. It’s the verbal equivalent of underlining.)

The last of the above types is more characteristic of British than of American use, but the next two are distinctively British and are relatively recent contributions of British English to the rhetorical inventory of impoliteness:

peremptory: ‘Is the tea ready?’ ‘The water has to boil, doesn’t it?’ (Everybody knows you can’t make tea without boiling hot water, and you can see that the water has not come to a boil yet, so stop bothering me with idiotic questions.)

antagonistic: ‘I telephoned you this morning, but you didn’t answer.’ ‘I was in the bath, wasn’t I?’ (The reason I didn’t answer was that I was in the bath, and it was a great annoyance having you phone at that time; if you had any sense and consideration, you would not have called then. [Never mind that the caller could not possibly know all that – I was annoyed at the time and I’m even more annoyed now at what I perceive to be a complaint when I am the one who was put upon.])

Both Americans and the British innovate in English pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. British people, however, tend to be more aware of American innovations than Americans are of British ones. The cause of that greater awareness may be a keener linguistic sensitivity on the part of the British, or a more insular anxiety and hence irritation about influences from abroad, or the larger number of American speakers and their higher prominence in fields that require innovation, or perhaps the fact that present-day Americans have cultural rootlets all over the world and so are less aware of the British Isles.

Perhaps Americans do innovate more; after all, there are four to five times as many English speakers in the United States as in the United Kingdom. So one might expect, on the basis of population size alone, four to five times as much innovation in American English. Moreover, Americans have been disproportionately active in certain technological fields, such as computer systems, that are hotbeds of lexical innovation.

It is curious and remarkable that the present state of affairs was foreseen with great accuracy by John Adams, who in 1780, even before it was obvious that the American Revolution would succeed, wrote:

English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age. The reason of this is obvious, because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations will, aided by the influence of England in the world, whether great or small, force their language into general use.

So is America ruining the English language? Certainly, if you believe that extending the language to new uses and new speakers ruins it. Certainly, if you believe that change is ruin. Certainly, if what John Adams foresaw was ruination.

John Algeo is Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia and was Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor of English until his retirement. He has been a Fulbright Research Fellow and a Guggenheim Fellow at the University of London. He is a past President of the American Dialect Society, the American Name Society, and the Dictionary Society of North America. He was editor of American Speech, the journal of the American Dialect Society, for ten years and is the author of numerous academic books and articles dealing with the history of the English language, British-American differences, and current usage. With his wife, Adele, for ten years he co-edited "Among the New Words," a quarterly article concerning additions to the English vocabulary. His most recent academic work is as editor and contributing author of volume 6 of the Cambridge History of the English Language (Cambridge University Press) on the history of English in North America. He is currently revising his and Thomas Pyles's textbook, Origins and Development of the English Language for its fifth edition. He has spoken at academic and Theosophical meetings throughout the United States and in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, India, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and Wales.

In the early part of the seventeenth century English settlers began to bring their language to America, and another series of changes began to take place. The settlers borrowed words from Indian languages for such strange trees as the hickory and persimmon, such unfamiliar animals as raccoons and woodchucks. Later they borrowed other words from settlers from other countries – for instance, chowder and prairie from the French, scow and sleigh from the Dutch. They made new combinations of English words, such as backwoods and bullfrog, or gave old English words entirely new meanings, such as lumber ( which in British English means approximately junk ) and corn ( which in British means any grain, especially wheat ). Some of the new terms were needed, because there were new and un-English things to talk about. Others can be explained only on the general theory that languages are always changing, and American English is no exception.

Aside from the new vocabulary, differences in pronunciation, in grammatical construction, and especially in intonation developed. If the colonization had taken place a few centuries earlier, American might have become as different from English as French is from Italian. But the settlement occurred after the invention of printing, and continued through a period when the idea of educating everybody was making rapid progress. For a long time most of the books read in America came from England, and a surprising number of Americans read those books, in or out of school. Moreover, most of the colonists seem to have felt strong ties with England. In this they were unlike their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who apparently made a clean break with their continental homes.

A good many Englishmen and some Americans used to condemn every difference that did develop, and as recently as a generation ago it was not unusual to hear all “Americanisms” condemned, even in America. It is now generally recognized in this country that we are not bound to the Queen’s English, but have a full right to work out our own habits. Even a good many of the English now concede this, though some of them object strongly to the fact that Americanisms are now having an influence on British usage.

There are thousands of differences in detail between British and American English, and occasionally they crowd together enough to make some difficulty. If you read that a man, having trouble with his lorry, got out his spanner and lifted the bonnet to see what was the matter, you might not realize that the driver of the truck had taken out his wrench and lifted the hood. It is amusing to play with such differences, but the theory that the American language is now essentially different from English does not hold up. It is often very difficult to decide whether a book was written by an American or an English man. Even in speech it would be hard to prove that national differences are greater than some local differences in either country. On the whole, it now seems probable that the language habits of the two countries will grow more, rather than less, alike, although some differences will undoubtedly remain and others may develop.

It also seems probable that there will be narrow-minded and snobbish people in both countries for some time to come. But generally speaking, anybody who learnsto speak and write the standard English of his own country, and to regard that of the other country as a legitimate variety with certain interesting differences, will have little trouble wherever he goes.

Studying foreign languages is important for everybody. People learn foreign languages from various reasons. They want to travel abroad a lot, they want to read foreign materials (books, newspaper, magazines..). Many people need knowledge of foreign languages for their work, for example translators, interprets airport staff, shop assistants, waiters etc. People working in so called tourist industry or in export section of a firm can’t work without knowing foreign languages. The students make the largest group of people who learn foreign languages.

Most students in the world study English. It is one of the compulsory subjects at school all over the world. English is the most widely spread language. It’s the mother tongue for people in the English speaking countries. It means in Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is the second language in former British colonies (India, Pakistan, African countries…).

English is working language of many international organizations and events. And if somebody wants to take place in a world congress or to be successful in business he must master 4 skills in every language. 4 skills mean reading, speaking, writing and understanding. I think that all four skills are necessary but speaking is the most important.

English belong together with European languages to a large family of Indo-European languages. This family has seven branches. English is one of Germanic languages. It is coming form three languages – from Old German, Old Norse and French. These three languages merged.

Nowadays about 420 million people use English which means that English is the most widespread language in the world. It is used not only as a native language but also for practical purposes – in administrative, business, technology, education, sport etc. English become so important only in the 17th century with the first settlements outside Europe.

The English language is of Germanic origin. Old English had many inflections to show various grammar forms (e.g. singular, plural, tense, person). The pronunciation was different as well. But over centuries words have been simplified and in fact have very few inflections now, but pronunciation and spelling become more difficult. English borrowed words from many other languages – French, Spanish, even Czech.

There ate five main types of English which differ in pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary but the differences are not so crucial. There are: British English, American English, Australian English, Indian English and African English.

Now we will meet with some differences between British (so called “King’s “) English and American English. American English has been the language of American continent for more that three centuries. These two versions of English are the results of the different historical development of England and America.

There is number of similar differences in vocabulary, there are also differences in spelling, grammar, intonation and pronunciation.

1. Spelling: reading American books without having been told about peculiarities of American spelling, we might regard as a misprint what is in fact correct American spelling. E.g. the endings “–our”, “-re”, are written “–or”, “-er” (color, labor, center, theater). The “l” isn’t doubled in such word as traveller, travelling etc. The Americans have also adopted a simplified way of spelling certain words as program, catalog, check, thru, tho instead of programm, catalogue, cheque, through, though.

2. Grammar: the differences in grammar are also so few. E.g. most American say: „Do you have? I don’t have” where an Englishman would say:“ Have you got? I haven’t got”.

3. Vocabulary: there are the great differences in vocabulary. These differences are important, because our ignoring them may lead to unpleasant misunderstanding. There are many differences in the names of foodstuffs, shop and clothing.

In the USA in Great Britain

a billion is called a thousand million

a trillion is called a billion

first floor is called ground floor

check is called bill

bill is called banknote

gasoline (or “gas”) is called petrol

pants is called trousers

store is called shop

general store is called department store

4. Pronunciation: the American pronunciation has preserved a feature of the language in its earlier stages of development while the British pronunciation of these days appears to be more developed in comparison with it. The American speak somewhat more slowly than the English.

A. The /-r/ sound is also pronounced when final (e.g. far, four, were) or when followed by a consonant (farm, force, work)

B. The /-o/ sound is so open that is sometimes seems to us as if the Americans pronounced /-a/ instead (e.g. on, not, dollar).

C. The /-a:/ sound in such words as class, past half, after, can’t dance, example is pronounced something like “a” is bad.

5. Intonation: intonation is “melody” of speech. In comparison with the lively British intonation, the American intonation seems to be somehow monotonous. The melody of the speech is simpler as there are not rises and falls of the speech and that is why American English is easier to understand than British English.

We must not begin to mix the two, but to concentrate on learning either British or American English.

Once you have thoroughly studied intonation and word connections, you can begin to address pronunciation.

The three most important vowels are [æ], [ä], and [ ].

This last symbol, called the schwa, is represented with an upside down e, and is the most common sound in the English language. These are the vowels found in cat, caught and cut.

When people in NYC meet, they always ask where the other is from. Actual New Yorkers are something of a rarity here. But when I tell them I'm from Georgia, people are quick to point out that I really don't have much of a southern accent.

Point of fact, I make an effort not to have much of an accent. Last night, my roommate's boyfriend excoriated me for this.

His argument is that I should just be myself and I shouldn't pander to ignorant people who would judge me based on something so superfluous as my accent. He also says that by accepting and embracing the "cultural marker" that is the way I speak, I am doing more to effect social change and eradicate that same ignorance.

He went so far as to say that intentionally masking one's accent or affecting another is fraudulent.

My argument is that I don't care about society. I have to deal with individuals and even ignorant ones may have something that I want. I adopt a neutral American accent to avoid distracting people from the more important items on the agenda.

Southerners in particular regard their accents as charming and enjoy the attention it gets them. They object vehemently to those who would assume that they are uneducated based on the fact that they have an accent.

But they like to ignore the fact that the South is a region whose population is afflicted with a few types of rather pernicious stupidity, namely racism, homophobia, sexism, and religion.

The NIL/NALS report confirms once again that Southern US states continue to have the most deplorable social conditions in the country, including the highest rates of adult illiteracy. Mississippi ranked worst among the 50 states, with every third adult in the state, 30 percent of its adult population, placed in Level I. Louisiana has the second highest illiteracy rate with 28 percent of its adult population in Level I, followed by Alabama, Florida and South Carolina, each with 25 percent. In these states the combined Level I and Level II literacy rates would push the level of illiteracy and near-illiteracy to nearly 70 percent of the adult population.

**III. Conclusion**

**3.1 Illiteracy on the rise in America**

So, the southern reputation for ignorance and stupidity is not unwarranted.

I also contend that an accent is not like skin color in that you aren't born with it and you can change it. I don't disagree that it's difficult to get rid of an accent because so often one can't hear it, but that is beside the point. You can be rid of it.

And most fundamentally, being rid of an accent aids clarity and understanding when communicating verbally.

I have a friend named Brian. The name "Brian" has two syllables, Bri-an, in standard American pronunciation. My friend pronounces it with one syllable, "Braan." Last night, we went out to a bar and every single person we met could not get his name right until I repeated his name for them.

Southerners also add syllables where none are in standard American pronunciation. Take the word "pet." Now, that is a simple, one-syllable word. Pet. But a southerner with a particular type of accent will turn it into two syllables, "pay-et." To many, this pronunciation mangles the word to the point of unintelligibility.

In business school, we were encouraged to rid ourselves of our accents. The point was that even though it might be cute and help you with the ladies (or gentlemen), in business it is a distraction and may cost you business with people who find it difficult to take you seriously when you speak like Scarlet O'Hara or Foghorn Leghorn.

To the argument that it is dishonest to change one's accent, I think this contradicts the premise behind the other arguments. If accents shouldn't matter, then what difference should it make if one changes them? But I regard changing one's accent as similar to changing one's shirt.

If you are American and you put on a British accent, I may not notice that you're a faker, but if I find out you're a faker, I will think of you as I do those 50 year-old men who wear clingy, ripped up Abercrombie & Fitch t-shirts, as a person with pretentions.

If you adopt a neutral American accent, which originates in the Midwest, by the way, there's nothing to think of you by the way you speak. You could say you're from wherever you please and the worst that people will say is, "Where's your accent?" And you can simply say, "I don't have one."

**Bibliography**

1. Murphy Raymond. English Grammar in Use. - Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2. Орлов Г.А. Современный английский язык в Австралии. –Москва, «Высшая школа», 1978.

3. Варианты полинациональных литературных языков – Киев, «Наукова думка», 1981.

4. Швейцер А.Д. Американский вариант литературного английского языка: пути формирования и современный статус.//Вопросы языкознания,1995, №6,стр. 3-17.

5. Г.Б.Антрушина, О.В.Афанасьева. Лексикология английского языка. - М. Изд. Дрофа. 1999

6. F.R.Palmer. Semantics. A new outline. - M. V.Sh. 1982.

7. Александрова С.Я. Семантический анализ сложноподчиненных предложений с придаточными, вводимыми союзами as и as thougt // Вопросы грамматической структуры предложения и текста в английском языке:Сб. науч. тр. - М., 1985. - Вып.247. - С.86-96.

8. Бабалова Л.Л. Об употреблении союзов и, а, но в сложном предложении // Русский язык за рубежом. - 1980. - N4. - С.57-62.

9. Биренбаум Я.Г. К теории сложного предложения (На материале английского языка) // Вопросы языкознания. - 1982. - N2. - С.50-58.

10. Биренбаум Я.Г. Сопоставление сложноподчиненных предложений русского и английского языков // Сопоставительный лингвистический анализ: Науч. тр. - Куйбышев, 1977. - Т.202. - С.29-32.

11. Валимова Г.В. О сочинительных союзах в сложном предложении // Материалы IX и X конференций Северо-Кавказского зонального объединения кафедр русского языка. - Ростов н/Д: Изд-во Рост. ун-та, 1971. - С.87-93.

12. Верховская И.П. К вопросу о классификации сложноподчиненных предложений в современном английском языке // Проблемы грамматики английского языка: Сб. науч. тр. - М,1981. - Вып.173. - С.31-43.

13. Гвоздев А.Н. Современный русский литературный язык. Ч.2: Синтаксис. - М.: Просвещение, 1958. - 301 с.

14. Гепнер Ю.Р. Сложное предложение и принципы его изучения: Учеб. пособие. - Харьков, 1963.

15. Данкова М.П. Структурные и статистические характеристики сложносочиненных предложений в авторской и разговорной речи художественной прозы (на материале английского языка) // Теория и практика лингвистического описания разговорной речи. - Горький, 1976. - Вып.7. - С.127-133.

16. Жельвис В.И. К вопросу о видах синтаксической связи между частями сложного союзного предложения (На материале английского языка) // Ученые записки Ленинградского государственного педагогического института. Кафедра английского языка. - 1958. - Т.181, вып.3. - С.343-366.

17. Жельвис В.И. Существуют ли в языке сочинительные и подчинительные союзы ? (На материале английского языка) // Ученые записки Ленинградского государственного педагогического института. Вопросы английской филологии. -1962. - Т.226. - С.253-273.

18. Ильиш Б.А. Современный английский язык: Теорет. курс. : Учеб. пособие для вузов. -2-е изд., испр. и доп. - М., 1948. - 347 с.

19. Ильиш Б.А. Строй современного английского языка: Учеб. пособие для студ.пед.ин-тов.-2-е изд. - Л.: Просвещение, 1971. - 365 с.

20. Ильиш Б.А. Структура сложноподчиненного предложения в современном английском языке // Ученые записки Ленингр. гос. пед. ин-та. Вопросы английской филологии. - 1962. - Т.226. - С.3-25.

21. Иофик Л.Л. Сложное предложение в новоанглийском языке. - Л.: Изд-во Ленигр. ун-та, 1968.

22. Карпова Л.В. О функциональном критерии в синтаксисе (на материале сложноподчиненных предложений с союзом as, when) // Некоторые проблемы слова и предложения в современном английском языке: Респ. сб. - Горький, 1976. - С.176-192.

23. Конькова И.П. Сложносочиненное союзное предложение в современном английском языке. Душанбе, 1969. - 240 с.

24. Леденев Ю.И. О наиболее существенных свойствах русских союзов // Русский язык: Материалы и исследования - Ставрополь, 1971. - Вып.3. - С.36-42.

25. Оганесова Р.Д., Скорлуповская Е.В. О выделении сочинительных союзов // Материалы IX и X конференций Северо-Кавказского зонального объединения кафедр русского языка. - Ростов н/Д: Изд-во Рост. ун-та, 1971. - С.94-102.

26. Петерсон М.Н. Союзы в русском языке // Русский язык в школе. - 1952. - N5. - С.28-34.

27. Хаймович Б.С., Роговская Б.И. Теоретическая грамматика английского языка:Учеб.пособие для вузов. - М.: Высшая школа,1967. - 297с.

28. Ширяев Е.Н. Дифференциация сочинительных и подчинительных союзов на синтаксической основе// Филологические науки. - 1980. - N2. - С.49-54.

29. Семантико-стилистические исследования текста и предложения:Межвуз. сб. науч. тр. / Отв.ред. З.Я.Тураева. - Л., 1980. - 125 с.

30. Качалова К.Н., Израилевич Е.Е. Практическая грамматика английского языка с упражнениями и ключами. М, 1997. - 717 с.

31. Бархударов Л.С., Штелинг Д.А. Грамматика английского языка. - М., 1973.

32. Гальперин И.Р. Очерки по стилистике английского языка. - М., 1958.

33. Cronin A.J. The Citadel. - М., 1966.

34. Galsworthy J. To let. - М, 1954.

35. London I. Martin Eden. - М., 1954.

36. Green G. Quet Amerikan. - М., 1956.

37. Hardy T. Tess of the d’ Urbervilles. - М, 1950.

38. Dickens Ch. Adventures of Oliver Twist. - M., 1949.

39.http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/resources/working\_paper/noframe\_2b\_recen.htm40. http://www.google.com/search?q=Theory+of+Borrowing&hl=en&lr=

41. http://www.pupress.princeton.edu/tirole/chap4.pdf

42. <http://www.poetrymagic.co.uk/literary-theory/a-summing-up.html>

**Contents**

I. Introduction.

1.1 General American

II. Main Part.

2.1 Pronunciation symbols

2.2 Pronunciation challenges

2.2.1 Use of the present perfect

2.2.2 Possession

2.2.3 The verb “get”

2.2.4 Vocabulary

2.2.5 Prepositions

2.2.6 Past Simple

2.2.7 Spelling

2.3 Differences between American English and British English

3.2.1 Lexical differences

3.2.2 Grammatical differences

3.2.3 Punctuation

4.2 Sound system

4.2.1 Voiced and unvoiced consonants

4.2.2 The American R.

5.2 Another set of “Ears”

5.2.1 Spectrography

5.2.2 The low-back merger

5.2.3 The Northern cities shift

5.2.4 The southern shift

5.2.5 The California shift

6.2 Americans are Ruining English

6.2.1 American English is very corrupting

6.2.2 A language that doesn’t change is dead

III. Conclusion

Bibliography

1. F.R.Palmer. Semantics. A new outline. - M. V.Sh. 1982 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. F.R.Palmer. Semantics. A new outline. - M. V.Sh. 1982 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. London I. Martin Eden. - М., 1954 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. London I. Martin Eden. - М., 1954 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Green G. Quet Amerikan. - М., 1956 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Green G. Quet Amerikan. - М., 1956 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Green G. Quet Amerikan. - М., 1956 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)