**British vs. American English**

**Introduction**

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English is spoken in many countries either as the mother tongue or as a second language. That’s why instead of «English» there are many «Englishes» — variations of the language. In this article I’ll focus on the two mostly commonly used versions of English — British and American English.

Before we take a look at some of the differences between the two main types of English I’d like to stress that these differences are somehwat minor and with the ongoing internationalization of our modern world they could even said to be diminishing.

The few differences that exist between British and American English tend rather to enrich communication than slow it down.

Although not all my British readers might agree, I think that the American version of spoken English is becoming more and more dominant for several reasons. Let me give you an example to show you why American English has a stronger impact on British English than vice versa.

When you go to the UK and switch on the TV you will see a lot of American shows, movies and films which, of course, are shown in the original, American version. Thus, especially young people watching TV will learn a lot of American vocabulary and phrases which they easily internalize and use as their own. It follows, modern British English is much more likely to be influenced by American English than the other way round because when you live in the US and watch TV you rarely will see a British show or film.

Another area where US English dominates is international business. Most globally operating companies are based in the US and hence the influence of American English terminology is very strong.

However, as with any issue, the more you think about it, the more variations you will encounter and it would be impossible to cover them all in one article.

That’s why we’ll move on now to the differences between British and American English. Instead of giving you a comprehensive rundown of all imaginable items I’ll limit myself to a small selection of my personal observations.

**Spelling**

When it comes to different spellings there isn’t really that much to say because in the near future the world will more or less agree on one uniform version.

British English has a tendency to keep the spelling of many words of French origin whereas Americans try to spell more closely to the way they pronounce words and they remove letters not needed, which makes sense to me. Here are some examples:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| British English |  | American English |
| centre | center |
| theatre | Theater |
| realise | Realize |
| catalogue | Catalog |
| programme | Program |
| travelled | Traveled |
| neighbour | neighbor |
| grey | gray |
| plough | plow |
| to practise (verb) | to practice (verb) |
| practice (noun) | practice (verb) |
| cheque | check (noun) |

Again, these are in my opinion examples for the most important spelling differences between British and American English. Of course, there are more of them and the purpose of this article is not to elaborate on orthography but to raise your awareness of the subject so you can make your own observations and draw conclusions.