Preface

Every language allows different kinds of variations: geographical or territorial, perhaps the most obvious, stylistic, the difference between the written and the spoken form of the standard national language and others. It is the national language of England proper, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and some provinces of Canada. It is the official language of Wales, Scotland, in Gibraltar and on the island of Malta. Modern linguistics distinguishes territorial variants of a national language and local dialects. Variants of a language are regional varieties of a standard literary language characterized by some minor peculiarities in the sound system, vocabulary and grammar and by their own literary norms.

Standard English – the official language of Great Britain taught at schools and universities, used by the press, the radio and the television and spoken by educated people may be defined as that form of English which is current and literary, substantially uniform and recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken or understood. Its vocabulary is contrasted to dialect words or dialectisms belonging to various local dialects. Local dialects are varieties of the English language peculiar to some districts and having no normalized literary form. Regional varieties possessing a literary form are called variants. Dialects are said to undergo rapid changes under the pressure of Standard English taught at schools and the speech habits cultivated by radio, television and cinema.

The differences between the English language as spoken in Britain. The USA, Australia and Canada are immediately noticeable in the field of phonetics. However these distinctions are confined to the articulatory-acoustic characteristics of some phonemes, to some differences in the use of others and to the differences in the rhythm and intonation of speech. The few phonemes characteristic of American pronunciation and alien to British literary norms can as a rule be observed in British dialects.

# *AMERICAN ENGLISH*

The variety of English spoken in the USA has received the name of American English.The term variant or variety appears most appropriate for several reasons. American English cannot be called a dia­lect although it is a regional variety, because it has a literary normalized form called Standard American, whereas by definition given above a dialect has no literary form. Neither is it a separate language, as some American authors, like H. L. Mencken, claimed, because it has neither grammar nor vocabulary of its own. From the lexical point of view one shall have to deal only with a heterogeneous set of Americanisms.

An Americanism may be defined as a word or a set expression peculiar to the English language as spoken in the USA. E.g. *cookie* 'a biscuit'; *frame house* 'a house consisting of a skeleton of timber, with boards or shingles laid on'; *frame-up* 'a staged or preconcerted law case'; *guess* 'think'; *store* 'shop'.

A general and comprehensive description of the American variant is given in Professor Shweitzer's monograph. An important aspect of his treatment is the distinction made between americanisms belonging to the literary norm and those existing in low colloquial and slang. The differ­ence between the American and British literary norm is not systematic.

The American variant of the English language differs from British English in pronunciation, some minor features of grammar, but chiefly in vocabulary, and this paragraph will deal with the latter.1 Our treat­ment will be mainly diachronic.

Speaking about the historic causes of these deviations it is necessary to mention that American English is based on the language imported to the new continent at the time of the first settlements, that is on the Eng­lish of the 17th century. The first colonies were founded in 1607, so that the first colonizers were contemporaries of Shakespeare, Spenser and Mil­ton. Words which have died out in Britain, or changed their meaning may survive in the USA. Thus, *I guess* was used by Chaucer for *I* *think.* For more than three centuries the American vocabulary developed more or less independently of the British stock and, was influenced by the new surroundings. The early Americans had to coin words for the unfamiliar fauna and flora. Hence *bull-frog* 'a large frog', *moose* (the American elk), *oppossum, raccoon* (an American animal related to the bears), for animals; and *corn, hickory,* etc. for plants. They also had to find names for the new conditions of economic life: *back-country* 'districts not yet thickly populated', *back-settlement, backwoods* 'the forest beyond the cleared country', *backwoodsman* 'a dweller in the backwoods'.

The opposition of any two lexical systems among the variants described is of great linguistic and heuristic value because it furnishes ample data for observing the influence of extra-linguistic factors upon the vocabu­lary. American political vocabulary shows this point very definitely: *absentee voting* 'voting by mail', *dark horse* 'a candidate nominated unexpectedly and not known to his voters', *to gerrymander* 'to arrange and falsify the electoral process to produce a favorable result in the interests of a particular party or candidate', *all-outer* 'an adept of decisive meas­ures'.

Many of the foreign elements borrowed into American English from the Indian dialects or from Spanish penetrated very soon not only into British English but also into several other languages, Russian not excluded, and so became international. They are: *canoe, moccasin, squaw, tomahawk, wigwam,* etc. and translation loans: *pipe of peace, pale-face* and the. like, taken from Indian languages. The Spanish borrowings like *cafeteria, mustang, ranch, sombrero,* etc. are very familiar to the speakers of many European languages. It is only by force of habit that linguists still include these words among the specific features of American English.

As to the toponyms, for instance, *Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Utah* (all names of Indian tribes), or other names of towns, rivers and states named by Indian words, it must be borne in mind that in all coun­tries of the world towns, rivers and the like show in their names traces **of** the earlier inhabitants of the land in question.

Another big group of peculiarities as compared with the English of Great Britain is caused by some specific features of pronunciation, stress or spelling standards, such as [ae] for in *ask, dance, path,* etc., or Ie] for [ei] in *made, day* and some other.

The American spelling is in some respects simpler than its British counterpart, in other respects just different. The suffix *-our* is spelled *-or,* so that *armor* and *humor* are the American variants of *armour* and *humour. Altho* stands for *although* and *thru* for *through.* The table below illustrates some of the other differences but it is by no means exhaustive. For a more complete treatment the reader is referred to the monograph by A. D. Schweitzer:

## British spelling American spelling

offence offense

cosy cozy

practice practise

thralldom thralldom

jewellery jewelery

traveling traveling

In the course of time with the development of the modern means of communication the lexical differences between the two variants show a tendency to decrease. Americanisms penetrate into Standard English and Britishisms come to be widely used in American speech. Americanisms mentioned as specific in manuals issued a few decades ago are now used on both sides of the Atlantic or substituted by terms formerly considered as specifically British. It was, for instance, customary to contrast the English word *autumn* with the American *fall.* In reality both words are used in both countries, only *autumn* is somewhat more elevated, while in England the word *fall* is now rare in literary use, though found in some dialects and surviving in set expressions: *spring and fall, the fall of the year* are still in fairly common use.

Cinema and TV are probably the most important channels for the passage of Americanisms into the language of Britain and other languages as well: the Germans adopted the word *teenager* and the French speak of *Vautomatisation.* The influence of American publicity is also a vehicle of Americanisms. This is how the British term *wireless* is replaced by the Americanism *radio.* The jargon of American film-advertising makes its way into British usage; i.e. *of all time* (in "the greatest film of all time"). The phrase is now firmly established as standard vocabulary and applied to subjects other than films.

The personal visits of writers and scholars to the USA and all forms of other personal contacts bring back Americanisms.

The existing cases of difference between the two variants, are con­veniently classified into:

1) Cases where there are no equivalents in British English: *drive-in* a cinema where you can see the film without getting out of your car' or 'a shop where motorists buy things staying in the car'; *dude ranch* 'a sham ranch used as a summer residence for holiday-makers from the cities'. The noun *dude* was originally a contemptuous nickname given by the inhabitants of the Western states to those of the Eastern states. Now there is no contempt intended in the word *dude.* It simply means 'a person who pays his way on a far ranch or camp'.

2) Cases where different words are used for the same denotatum, such as *can, candy, mailbox, movies, suspenders, truck* in the USA and *tin, sweets, pillar-box* (or *letter-box), pictures* or *flicks, braces* and *lorry* in England.

3) Cases where the semantic structure of a partially equivalent word is different. The word *pavement,* for example, means in the first place 'covering of the street or the floor and the like made of asphalt, stones or some other material'. The derived meaning is in England 'the footway at the side of the road'. The Americans use the noun *sidewalk* for this, while *pavement* with them means 'the roadway'.

4) Cases where otherwise equivalent words are different in distribu­tion. The verb *ride* in Standard English is mostly combined with such nouns as *a horse, a bicycle,* more seldom they say *to ride on a bus.* In Amer­ican English combinations like *a ride on the train to ride in a boat* are .quite usual.

5) It sometimes happens that the same word is used in American Eng­lish with some difference in emotional and stylistic colouring. *Nasty,* for example, is a much milder expression of disapproval in England than in the States, where it was even considered obscene in the 19th century. *Politician* in England means 'someone in polities', and is derogatory in the USA. Professor Shweitzer, pays special attention to phenomena dif­fering in social norms of usage. E.g. balance in its lexico-semantic vari­ant 'the remainder of anything' is substandard in British English and quite literary in America.

6) Last but not least, there may be a marked difference in frequency characteristics. Thus, *time-table* which occurs in American English very rarely, yielded its place to *schedule.*

This question of different frequency distribution is also of paramount importance if we wish to investigate the morphological peculiarities of the American variant. Practically speaking the same patterns and means of word-formation are used in coining neologisms in both variants. Only the frequency ob­served in both cases may be different. Some of the suffixes more frequently used in American English are: *-ее (draftee n* 'a young man about to be enlisted'), *-ette - tambourmajorette* 'one of the girl drummers in front of a procession'), *-dom* and *-ster,* as in *roadster* 'motor-car for long journeys by road' or *gangsterdom.*

American slang uses alongside the traditional ones also a few specific models, such as **verb stem-1- -er+adverb stem** *+--er:* e.g. *opener-upper* 'the first item on the programme' and *winder-upper* 'the last item', respectively. It also possesses some specific affixes and semi-affixes not used in literary Colloquial: -o, *-eroo, -aroo, -sie/sy,* as in *coppo* 'police­man', *fatso* 'a fat man', *bossaroo* 'boss', *chapsie* 'fellow'.

The trend to shorten words and to use initial abbreviations is even more pronounced than in the British variant. New coinages are incessant­ly introduced in advertisements, in the press, in everyday conversation; soon they fade out and are replaced by the newest creations. Ring Lardner, very popular in the 30's, makes one of his characters, a hospital nurse, repeatedly use two enigmatic abbreviations: G.F. and P. F.; at last the patient asks her to clear the mystery.

"What about Roy Stewart?" asked the man in bed.

"Oh, he's the fella I was telling you about," said Miss Lyons. **"He's my G.** F B. F"

"Maybe I'm a D.F. not to know, but would yoa tell me what a B.F. and G.F. are?"

"Well, you are dumb, aren't you?" said Miss Lyons. "A G.F., that's a girl friend, and a B.F. is a boy friend. I thought everybody knew that"

The phrases *boy friend* and *girl friend,* now widely used everywhere, originated in the USA. So it is an Americanism in the wider meaning of the term, i.e. an Americanism "by right of birth", whereas in the above definition it was defined Americanism synchronically as lexical units peculiar to the English language as spoken in the USA. Particularly common in American English are verbs with the hanging postpositive. They say that in Hollywood you never *meet* a man: you *meet up* with him, you do not *study* a subject but *study up* on it. In British English similar constructions serve to add a new meaning.

With words possessing several structural variants it may happen that some are more frequent in one country and the others in another. Thus, *amid* and *toward,* for example, are more often used in the States and *amidst* and *towards* in Great Britain.

A well-known humourist G. Mikes goes as far as to say: "It was decid­ed almost two hundred years ago that English should be the language spoken in the United States. It is not known, however, why this decision has not been carried out." In his book "How to Scrape Skies" he gives numerous examples to illustrate this proposition: "You must be extreme­ly careful concerning the names of certain articles. If you ask for sus­penders in a man's shop, you receive a pair of braces, if you ask for a pair of pants, you receive a pair of trousers and should you ask for a pair of braces, you receive a queer look. It has to be mentioned that although a lift is called an elevator in the United States, when hitch-hiking, you do not ask for an elevator, you ask for a lift.

There is some confusion about the word *flat.* A flat in America is called an apartment; what they call a flat is a puncture in your tyre (or as they spell it, tire). Consequently the notice: *flats fixed* does not indi­cate an estate agent where they are going to fix you up with a flat, but a garage where they are equipped to mend a puncture." Disputing the common statement that there is no such thing as the American nation, he says: "They do indeed exist. They have produced the American constitution, the American way of life, the comic strips in their newspapers: .they have their national game, baseball —which is cricket played with a strong American accent — and they have a national language, entirely their own."

This is of course an exaggeration, but a very significant one. It con­firms the fact that there is a difference between the two variants to be reckoned with. Although not sufficiently great to warrant American Eng­lish the status of an independent language, it is considerable enough to make a mixture of variants sound unnatural, so that students of English should be warned against this danger.

Local Dialects in the USA

The English language in the USA is characterized by relative uniformity throughout the country. One can travel three thousand miles without encountering any but the slightest dialect differences. Nevertheless, regional variations in speech undoubtedly exist and they have been observed and recorded by a number of investigators. The following three major belts of dialects have so far been identified, each with its own characteristic features: Northern, Midland and South­ern, Midland being in turn divided into North Midland and South Mid­land.

The differences in pronunciation between American dialects are most apparent, but they seldom interfere with understanding. Distinctions in grammar are scarce. The differences in vocabulary are rather numer­ous, but they are easy to pick up.

Cf., e.g., Eastern New England sour-milk cheese, Inland Northern Dutch cheese, New York City pot cheese for Standard American/cottage cheese *(творог).*

The American linguist F. Emerson maintains that American Eng­lish had not had time to break up into widely diverse dialects and he believes that in the course of time the American dialects might finally become nearly as distinct as the dialects in Britain. He is certainly great­ly mistaken. In modern times dialect divergence cannot increase. On the contrary, in the United States, as elsewhere, the national language is tending to wipe out the dialect distinctions and to become still more uniform.

Comparison of the dialect differences in the British Isles and in the USA reveals that not only are they less numerous and far less marked in the USA, but that the very nature of the local distinctions is different. What is usually known as American dialects is closer in nature to region­al variants of the literary language. The problem of discriminating between literary and dialect speech patterns in the USA is much more complicated than in Britain. Many American linguists point out that American English differs from British English in having no one locality whose speech patterns have come to be recognized as the model for the rest of the country.

# *CANADIAN, AUSTRALIAN AND INDIAN VARIANTS*

It should of course be noted that the American English is not the only existing variant. There are several other variants where difference from the British standard is normalized. Besides the Irish and Scottish vari­ants that have been mentioned in the preceding paragraph, there are Aus­tralian English, Canadian English, Indian English. Each of these has de­veloped a literature of its own, and is characterized by peculiarities in phonetics, spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Canadian English is influenced both by British and American Eng­lish but it also has some specific features of its own. Specifically Cana­dian words are called Canadianisms. They are not very frequent outside Canada, except *shack* 'a hut' and *to fathom out* 'to explain'.

The vocabulary of all the variants is characterized by a high percent­age of borrowings from the language of the people who inhabited the land before the English colonizers came. Many of them denote some spe­cific realia of the new country: local animals, plants or weather condi­tions, new social relations, new trades and conditions of labour. The local words for new not ions penetrate into the English language and later on may become international, if they are of sufficient interest and importance for people speaking other languages. The term international w о г d s is used to denote words borrowed from one language into sev­eral others simultaneously or at short intervals one after another. International words coming through the English of India are for in­stance: *bungalow* n, *jute* n, *khaki* adj, *mango* n, *nabob* n, *pyjamas, sahib, sari.*

Similar examples, though perhaps fewer in number, such as *boome­rang, dingo, kangaroo* are all adopted into the English language through its Australian variant. They denote the new phenomena found by Eng­lish immigrants on the new continent. A high percentage of words bor­rowed from the native inhabitants of Australia will be noticed in the so­norous Australian place names.

Otherwise an ample use was made of English lexical material. An intense development of cattle breeding in new conditions necessitated the creation of an adequate terminology. It is natural therefore that nouns like *stock, bullock* or *land* find a new life on Australian soil: *stockman* 'herdsman', *stockyard, stock-keeper* 'the owner of the cattle'; *bullock* v means 'to work hard', *bullocky dray* is a dray driven by bullocks; *an inlander* is a stock-keeper driving his stock from one pasture to another, *overland* v is 'to drive cattle over long distances'; *to punch a cow* 'to conduct a team of oxen'; *a puncher* 'the man who conducts a team of oxen'; *tucker-bag* 'the bag with provision'.

The differences described in the present chapter do not undermine our understanding of the English vocabulary as a balanced system. It has been noticed by a number of linguists that the British attitude to this phenomenon is somewhat peculiar. When anyone other than an Englishman uses English, the natives of Great Britain, often half-consciously, perhaps, feel that they have a special right to criticize his usage because it is "their" language. It is, however, unreasonable with respect to people in the Vfiited States, Canada, Australia and some other areas for whom English is their mother-tongue. Those who think that the Ameri­cans must look to the British for a standard are wrong and, vice versa, it is not for the American to pretend that English in Great Britain is inferior to the English he speaks. At present there is no single "correct" English and the American, Canadian and Australian English have devel­oped standards of their own.

Conclusion

I. English is the national language of England proper, the USA, Australia and some provinces of Canada. It was also at different times imposed on the inhabitants of the former and present British colonies and. protectorates as well as other Britain- and US-dominated territories, where the population has always stuck to its own mother tongue.

II. British English, American English and Australian English are variants of the same language, because they serve all spheres of verbal communication. Their structural pecularities, especially morphology, syntax and word-formation, as well as their word-stock and phonetic system are essentially the same. American and Australian standards are slight modifications of the norms accepted in the British Isles. The status of Canadian English 'has not yet been established.

III. The main lexical differences between the variants are caused by the lack of equivalent lexical units in one of them, divergences in the semantic structures of polysemantic words and peculiarities of usage of some words on different territories.

IV. The British local dialects can be traced back to Old English dia­lects. Numerous and distinct, they are characterized by phonemic and structural peculiarities. The local dialects are being gradually replaced by regional variants of the literary language, i. e. by a literary standard with a proportion of local dialect features.

V. The so-called local dialects in the British Isles and in the USA are used only by the rural population and only for the purposes of oral communication. In both variants local distinctions are more marked in pronunciation, less conspicuous in vocabulary and insignificant in grammar.

VI. Local variations in the USA are relatively small. What is called by tradition American dialects is closer in nature to regional variants of the national literary language.