

The lexical differences between american english and british english



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there is only one that can claim to be a more or less universal language?" English. It is estimated that there are over 300 million native speakers, of whom some 200 million live in the United States and some 50 million in the United Kingdom. In addition to native speakers there are about 500 to 700 million people using English, which makes the total number of speakers nearly one-fourth of the world's population. Today, American English is particularly influential; there are many other varieties of English around the world, including, for example, Australian English, New Zealand English, Canadian English, South African English, Indian English and Caribbean English. Among the different variants of English the two best known are American English and British English. There do exist differences between the two, just as many differences in the varieties within themselves.

To be consistent in the use of English, and more importantly, to be understood, the nonnative speaker needs to know which words have distinct meanings and pronunciations depending on whether they are used by an Englishman or an American. This is necessary not only for sake of communication, but also to avoid embarrassment. This paper will focus on how American English came to be different from British English in lexicology.

Historical Background of British and American English

The English language was first introduced to the Americas by British colonization, beginning in the early 17th century.

Similarly, the language spread to numerous other parts of the world as a result of British trade and colonization elsewhere and the spread of the former British Empire, which, by 1921, held sway over a population of about 470-570 million people: approximately a quarter of the world's population

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at that time. Over the past 400 years, the form of the language used in the Americas??” especially in the United States??” and that used in the United Kingdom and the British Islands have diverged in many ways, leading to the dialects now commonly referred to as American English and British English. Differences between the two include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary (lexis), spelling, punctuation, idioms, formatting of dates and numbers, and so on, although the differences in written and most spoken grammar structure tend to be much more minor than those of other aspects of the language in terms of mutual intelligibility.

A small number of words have completely different meanings between the two dialects or are even unknown or not used in one of the dialects. One particular contribution towards formalizing these differences came from Noah Webster, who wrote the first American dictionary (published 1828) with the intention of showing that people in the United States spoke a different dialect from Britain. This divergence between American English and British English once caused George Bernard Shaw to say that the United States and United Kingdom are “two countries divided by a common language”;¹ a similar comment is ascribed to Winston Churchill. Likewise, Oscar Wilde wrote, “We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, the language.”² Henry Sweet predicted in 1877 that within a century, American English, Australian English and British English would be mutually unintelligible.

It may be the case that increased worldwide communication through radio, television, the Internet, and globalization has reduced the tendency to regional variation. This can result either in some variations becoming extinct
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(for instance, the wireless, superseded by the radio) or in the acceptance of wide variations as perfectly good English everywhere. Often at the core of the dialect though, the idiosyncrasies remain.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that although spoken American and British English are generally mutually intelligible, there are enough differences to cause occasional misunderstandings or at times embarrassment? ??“ for example, some words that are quite innocent in one dialect may be considered vulgar in the other. A. The History of British English The history of the English language can be dated from the arrival of three Germanic tribes to the Britain during the 5th Century AD. Angles, Saxons and Jutes crossed the North Sea from what is the present day Denmark and northern Germany to Britain. The inhabitants of Britain previously spoke a Celtic language. However, it was quickly displaced by the language brought with the invaders. Most of the Celtic speakers were pushed into Wales, Cornwall and Scotland.

One group migrated to the Brittany Coast of France where their descendants still speak the Celtic Language of Breton today. The Angles were named from Engle, their land of origin. After experiencing constant development, immigrates??™ language had changed into the current English. Up to now, it has more than one thousand five hundred years, which some scholars divided into several stages in order to illustrate the history of English. However, they did not divide it in the same way. Here quotes the way of American professor Kennedy who divided historical process of period into such three stages. 1. The Period of Old English West Germanic invaders from Jutland and southern Denmark: the Angles (whose name is the source of the <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

words England and English), Saxons, and Jutes, began to settle in the British Isles in the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

They spoke a mutually intelligible language, similar to modern Frisian - the language of the northeastern region of the Netherlands - that is called Old English. Four major dialects of Old English emerged, Northumbrian in the north of England, Mercian in the Midlands, West Saxon in the south and west, and Kentish in the Southeast. ³ These invaders pushed the original, Celtic-speaking inhabitants out of what is now England into Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland, leaving behind a few Celtic words. These Celtic languages survive today in the Gaelic languages of Scotland and Ireland and in Welsh. Cornish, unfortunately, is, in linguistic terms, now a dead language. (The last native Cornish speaker died in 1777) Also influencing English at this time were the Vikings. Norse invasions and settlement, beginning around 850, brought many North Germanic words into the language, particularly in the north of England. Some examples are dream, which had meant joy until the Vikings imparted its current meaning on it from the Scandinavian cognate draumr, and skirt, which continues to live alongside its native English cognate shirt.

The majority of words in modern English come from foreign, not Old English roots. In fact, only about one sixth of the known Old English words have descendants surviving today. But this is deceptive; Old English is much more important than these statistics would indicate.

About half of the most commonly used words in modern English have Old English roots. Words like be, water, and strong, for example, derive from Old

English roots. 4 Old English, whose best known surviving example is the poem *Beowulf*, lasted until about 1100. Shortly after the most important event in the development and history of the English language, the Norman Conquest.

2. The Period of Middle English The period of Middle English extends roughly from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. This period was marked by important and significant changes in the English language, especially in the vocabulary. The Norman Invasion and Conquest of Britain in 1066 and the resulting French Court of William the Conqueror gave the Norwegian-Dutch influenced English a Norman-Parisian-French effect. From 1066 until about 1400, Latin, French, and English were spoken. English almost disappeared entirely into obscurity during this period by the French and Latin dominated court and government.

However, in 1362, the Parliament opened with English as the language of choice, and the language was saved from extinction. Present-day English is approximately 50% Germanic (English and Scandinavian) and 50% Romance (French and Latin). Many new words added to Middle English during this period came from Norman French, Parisian French, and Scandinavian. Norman French words imported into Middle English include: catch, wage, warden, reward, and warrant. Parisian French gave Middle English: chase, guarantee, regard, guardian, and gage. Scandinavian gave to Middle English the important word of law. English nobility had titles which were derived from both Middle English and French. French provided: prince, duke, peer, marquis, viscount, and baron.

5 Middle English independently developed king, queen, lord, lady, and earl. Governmental administrative divisions from French include county, city, village, justice, palace, mansion, and residence. Middle English words include town, home, house, and hall. 3.

The Period of Modern English Modern English period extends from fifteenth century to the present day. Modern English developed by the efforts of literary and political writings. From 1500 to 1700 is the early modern English.

During this time, the chief influence of this time was great humanistic movement of the Renaissance. Since the 16th Century, because of the contact that the British had with many peoples from around the world, and the Renaissance of Classical learning, many words have entered the language either directly or indirectly. 6 New words were created at an increasing rate. Shakespeare coined over 1600 words. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries are a period of rapid expansion for the English vocabulary in the history of the English language. Other important developments at this period include the stabilizing effect on spelling of the printing press and the beginning of the direct influence of Latin, Greek on the lexicon.

Later, as English came into contact with other cultures around the world and distinctive dialects of English developed in the many areas which Britain had colonized, other numerous languages made small but interesting contributions to the language vocabulary. Lexical improvement in this process has grown rapidly. Therefore, the vocabulary of English is the largest of any language. The historical aspect of English really encompasses more

than three stages of development above mentioned. English has what might be called a prehistory as well. English is just one relatively young member of an ancient family of languages whose descendants cover a fair portion of the globe.

During the English development, there are numerous words borrowed from abroad. Borrowed words include names of animals, clothing, food, scientific and mathematical terms, drinks, religious terms, sports, vehicles, music and art, weapons, political and military terms, and astronomical names.

languages that have contributed words to English include ??? Latin, Greek, French, German, Arabic, Hindi (from India), Italian, Malay, Dutch, Farsi (from Iran and Afghanistan), Sanskrit (from ancient India), Portuguese, Spanish, and Ewe (from Africa)???. 7 Even with all these borrowings the core of the language remains the Anglo-Saxon of Old English. Only about 5000 words from this period have remained unchanged but they include the basic building blocks of the language: household words, parts of the body, common animals, natural elements, most pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs. B. The Development of American English on the Basis of British English The history of American English can be divided into the colonial (1607-1776), the national (1776-1898), and the international (1898-present) periods. During nearly four hundred years of use in North America, the English language changed.

American English began in the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the 17th century the English language was brought to North American by colonists from England. They used the language spoken in England. ???

George P. Krapp, a professor in Columbia University of American, indicated in <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

his book that the British people had brought the Shakespeare and Milton?[™]s English into American. That is, Elizabethan English, the language used by Shakespeare, Milton and Banyan???. 8 At first the language stayed the same as the language used in Britain, but slowly the language began to change.

Sometimes, the English spoken in American changed but sometimes the language spoken in the place stayed the same, while the language in England changed. The development of the English language in America can be separated into three periods: The first period extends from the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 to the end of colonial times. In this period the population in America numbered about four million people, 90 percent of them came from Britain. The second period covers the expansion of the original thirteen colonies. This period may be said to close with the Civil War, about 1860. This period was marked by the arrival of the new immigrants from Ireland and Germany. The third period, since the Civil War, is marked by an important change in the source from which the European immigrants came.

They came from northern and southern Europe in large numbers. Following American independence, famous persons like Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Webster began to consider that the country should have a language of its own. English in America has developed a character of its own, reflecting the life and the physical and social environment of the American people.? As time went on, the English language gradually changed on both sides of the Atlantic. The Americans adopted many words from foreign languages and invented large number of new words to meet their various needs. ?. Reasons

for the Development of American English American English (variously
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abbreviated AmE, AE, AmEng, USEng, en-US), also known as United States English or U.

S. English, is a set of dialects of the English language used mostly in the United States. Approximately two thirds of native speakers of English live in the United States. English is the most common language in the United States. Though the US Federal government has no official language, English is considered the de facto language of the United States due to its widespread use. English has been given official status by 30 of the 50 state governments. The use of English in the United States was inherited from British colonization.

The first wave of English-speaking settlers arrived in North America in the 17th century. During that time, there were also speakers in North America of Spanish, French, Dutch, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Finnish, Russian (Alaska) and numerous Native American languages. A.

Being in Different Regions British English changed after the emigrants left their homeland while American English formed after the colonists settled on the continent. The Origin of American English was in the Colonial Period in the 17th century when the English language first came to America with the colonists. After arriving in the new continent-North America, the early settlers were not with just the only English language; there undoubtedly were several different dialects and they obviously had to cope with a general lack of uniformity of speech. It is also obvious that the changes producing the two variants of English happened on both sides of the ocean. 9 In those

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days it was very difficult for an immigrant in America to be in contact with people left behind in the old country and therefore the changes in language on either side did not transfer to the other. Life in America, in a totally new environment, was different from the life of the settlers; therefore language had to evolve because of the necessity of talking about new things, qualities, operations, concepts and ideas. There were features of colonial and frontier life that did not have an expression in the British English language; they encountered new plants, domesticated fish and animals.

Later they found themselves living among tribes of indigenous peoples who spoke strange languages, wore strange clothing, prepared strange foods and maintained tribal customs quite different from anything they had previously encountered. Even landscapes were different from the English countryside. All of these unfamiliar things needed to be named in order to lead their new life in the continent without obstacles. Therefore, they have created new words for new things they had seen.

B. Borrowing Words from Other Countries Borrowing words from the Indians, French, Spanish, Dutch, Germans and Africans is another way to make American English vocabulary different from those of British English. Actually, British English had also borrowed words from some of these countries, but compared with Britain, the words borrowed in American English were greatly and diversely different at such a certain time. 10 One simple way of creating new names was borrowing them ? often from the native Indian languages.

Many of the original Indian words contained sounds and had linguistic features that did not occur in English; therefore the words often changed

considerably both in form and meaning in the borrowing process. For instance, such words as hickory, pecan, chipmunk, squaw and raccoon are American Indian borrowings. The spheres of life represented by these borrowings show that the largest number of Indian loan words is connected with the Indian institutions and civilization. In these cases, as for these strange things they had previously met, it was also obviously easier to borrow the Indian term than to create a new one out of English elements. It was equally obvious that these terms were not transferred to British English, since these vocabularies were not present in Britain. From the early days of colonization, America became the melting pot of different nationalities and cultures.

As these cultures came in contact with one another, they also influenced the language. Besides the Indian language, sources for loaned words of American English were all the other languages that were present in the immigration. In the westward expansion of their territory, the English-speaking emigrants soon came into contact with the French words. American English also borrowed words from Spanish.

In the period of moving south toward the Gulf of Mexico and moving west toward the Rockies, the Anglo-Saxon settlers encountered permanent and substantial Spanish colonies. It is obvious that the largest groups of borrowings from the Spanish reflects the hacienda culture, which typified the Spanish colonial occupation and the ranching and mining economy which developed out of it. Contacts with the Dutch colonialists were established in the 17th century. However, Dutch sailors had been in contact with the colonialists long before that. Some of the words borrowed from Dutch are <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

wholly or in part translations rather than direct appropriations. The German migrations to America started also in the late 17th century. The contacts between the German and English-speaking immigrants have been to a large extent cultural, since a large portion of the borrowings from German concentrates on food terms and pleasant but commonplace social contact. One must not forget another big group of different kind of immigrants that influenced the American English ? the black people who were transported from Africa as slaves.

Such words as gumbo, jazz, voodoo, okra and chigger are Africans. Therefore African words are also widely used in American English. These are just a few examples of loan words; there are also many more languages, representing smaller groups of immigrants, which have also made contributions to the American English vocabulary.

All have done their part to make American English what it is today. C. Revolting Politics and Ideology in North America Northern American people fight against the autocratic rules of Britain in order to get their own freedom and rights. This kind of offensive attitude towards to Britain plays a very important role in the process of American English development. The people in North America dislike and hate British arts and literature that are related to British English.

They want a language with American feature which is different from British English. More and more scholars and authors think that they should use their own language to write books and to create without depending on British English. Noah Webster was one of them who made a great contribution to

developing American English vocabulary. 11 Webster is a dictionary publisher. Thanks to him, the American and British versions of the English language became separate, unique languages. In 1807, he began to write an expanded dictionary, *Webster's An American Dictionary of the English Language*, which would reform the language again, drawing it closer to his New England roots and making it a unique American language. The dictionary was published in 1828, and was an instant best seller. The book was also unique in that it contained a large number of Biblical definitions, more than any previously published reference, because Webster believed that the Bible and Christianity should play an important role in the lives of a free people and its government.

Webster changed the spelling of many words in his dictionaries in an attempt to make them easier to pronounce. Many of the differences between American English and other English variants originated this way. The modern convention of having only one acceptable and correct spelling for a word is due mostly to the efforts of Webster, in standardizing spelling. Prior to this, the popular sentiment toward spelling might have best been summed up by Benjamin Franklin.

A second edition of the dictionary was published in 1840, and a few days after Webster had finished revising the appendix to the second edition.

Webster's influence in American English lexicology, through his dictionary, has continued to today. The Different Meanings in American English Vocabulary Most of the differences in lexis or vocabulary between British and American English are in connection with concepts originating

from the 19th century to the mid 20th century, when new words were coined
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independently. Almost the entire vocabularies of the car/automobile and railway/railroad industries (see Rail terminology) are different between the UK and US, for example. Other sources of difference are slang or vulgar terms, where frequent new coinage occurs, and idiomatic phrases, including phrasal verbs. The differences most likely to create confusion are those where the same word or phrase is used for two different concepts.

Regional variations, even within the US or the UK, can create the same problems. It is not a straightforward matter to classify differences of vocabulary. David Crystal identifies some of the problems of classification on the facing page to his list of American English/British English lexical variation, and states “ this should be enough to suggest caution when working through an apparently simple list of equivalents”. 12A. Creation of American Lexicon North America has given the English lexicon many thousands of words. Several thousands words are now used in English as spoken internationally; however, several words died within a few years of their creation. All of these vocabularies are not found in British English. The process of coining new lexical items started as soon as the colonists began borrowing names for unfamiliar flora, fauna, and topography from the Native American languages.

Examples of such names are opossum, raccoon, squash, and moose. Other American Indian loanwords, such as wigwam or moccasin, describe artificial objects in common use among Native Americans. The languages of the other colonizing nations were also added to the American vocabulary; for instance, cookie, cruller, and pit (of a fruit) from Dutch; levee, portage, and gopher from French; barbecue, stevedore from Spanish. Among the earliest and <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

most notable regular words additions to the American vocabulary, dating from the early days of colonization through the early 19th century, are terms describing the features of the North American landscape; for instance, run, branch, fork, snag, bluff, gulch, neck (of the woods), barrens, bottomland, notch, knob, riffle, rapids, cutoff, trail, timberline, and divide etc, which have new meanings that were unknown in England.

All of these words had changed their spelling to same degree. With the new continent developing new forms of dwelling, a large number of words designating real estate concepts are such as land office, lot, outlands, waterfront, the verbs locate and relocate, betterment, addition, subdivision, types of property such as log cabin, adobe in the 18th century; frame house, apartment, tenement house, shack, shanty in the 19th century; project, condominium, townhouse, mobile home, multi-family in the 20th century. B.

Different Meanings between American and British English The word corn, used in England to refer to wheat (or any cereal), came to denote the plant, the most important crop in the U. S., originally named ??? Indian corn??? by the earliest settlers; wheat, rye, barley, oats, etc. came to be collectively referred to as grain or breadstuffs???. 13 Other notable farm related vocabulary additions were the new meanings assumed by barn, which is not only a building for hay and grain storage, but also for housing livestock and team that not just the horses, but also the vehicle along with them, as well as, in various periods, the terms range, (crop) crib, lay by (a crop), truck, elevator, sharecropping, and feedlot. 14 Taking accommodation for example, which in British English means lodging for travelers, also housing; while in American English, it means (esp. in the past) a local public conveyance, esp. <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

a train. Another one, ??? biscuit???, baked sweet or savoury cake-like item, usually means flat, which is hard when baked and softens over time (colloquially for sweet biscuits)???, but in American English, it means a type of quick bread served with savory foods. Such kinds of examples do exist in both American English and British English. C.

Same Objects Being Expressed in Different Vocabularies The vocabulary of American English and British English, the differences between these two varieties of English can be a source of confusion and even embarrassment. Many of the differences in vocabulary are the words used to describe same types of things. In this paper it takes housing for example to illustrate it. Whether being in Britain or America, the place where one lives is home, no matter what type of building it is. This is one case where Americans use the same term as the British.

When it comes to naming specific types of homes, however, the Americans and the British usually use terms that are quite different. In a few cases, such as ??? ranch house (a house on one level, often with a roof that does not slope much)???, the terms describe types of dwellings that are native to the American continent, thus unknown in Britain. Some other American terms, such as ??? apartment???, which the American people usually call a flat, may be familiar to speakers of British English, but in Britain they are used to describe different sorts of things, as in the following example: If you visit Hampton Court, you can have a tour of the Royal Apartments.

In other situations, however, there may be no exact British equivalent for the American term, as is the case with the following: A brownstone is a house

made of red-brown stone, especially one built in the cities of the eastern U. S. in the nineteenth century. Take a sentence for example that she bought a lovely old brownstone in Greenwich Village. The word cupboard exists in both American and British English, but while a British cupboard can be used for storing all sorts of things, from clothes to toys, to Americans a cupboard is almost always a kitchen cupboard that a place for storing food or dishware. Thus, most Americans would be very surprised to hear someone tell them to put their clothes in a cupboard, since they usually hang their clothes in a closet. D.

The Simplification in American English Lexicology American people have their own character that is different from that of British people. They are more pragmatic, effective, so a great deal of common English colloquialisms from various periods are American in origin such words as ??? OK, cool, darn, gnarly, hot, lame, doing great, hang , no-brainer, hip, fifty-fifty, gross, screw up, fool around, nerd, jerk, nuke, heads-up, thusly, way back; some English words now in general use, such as hijacking, disc jockey, boost, bulldoze, and jazz???, 15 originated as American slang. It can be said that American English has the more economical and phonetic spelling.

Unnecessary letters are left out and words spelled how they sound. An obvious example is the omission in American English (AE) of the letter ??? u??? in words such as color, neighbor, honor etc. Compare also the AE words traveling, jewelry and program with their British English counterparts travelling, jewellery and programme. In this way, American English omits the letter which is not pronounced. E.

Other Forms of American English Being Different from British English

American English has always shown a marked tendency to use substantives as verbs and form of compound words. Examples of nouns that can be used as verbs are interview, advocate, vacuum, lobby, expense, room, pressure, transition, feature, profile, buffalo, weasel, express, mail, belly-ache, spearhead, skyrocket, showcase, merchandise, service, corner, torch, exit, factor, gun author and, out of American material, proposition, graft, bad-mouth, vacation, major, backpack, backtrack, intern, ticket, hassle, blacktop, peer review, and dope. Compounds coined in the U. S. are for instance ??? foothill, sidehill, flatlands, badlands, landslide, overview, backdrop, teenager, brainstorm, bandwagon, hitchhike, smalltime, deadbeat, frontman, lowbrow and highbrow, hell-bent, foolproof, nitpick, about-face, upfront, split-level, fixer-upper, no-show; many of these are phrases used as adverbs or hyphenated attributive adjectives: non-profit, for-profit, free-for-all, ready-to-wear, catchall, low-down, down-and-out, down and dirty, in-your-face, nip and tuck; many compound nouns and adjectives are open: happy hour, fall guy, capital gain, road trip, wheat pit, head start, plea bargain; some of these are colorful, others are euphemistic???. Many compound nouns have the form verb plus preposition: add-on, backup such words as reserve, stoppage, music, stopover, lineup, shakedown, tryout, spinoff, rundown, shootout, holdup, hideout, comeback, cookout, kickback, makeover, takeover, rollback, rip-off, come-on, shoo-in, fix-up, tie-up, stand-in. These essentially are phrasal verbs used as nouns; some prepositional and phrasal verbs are in fact of American origin for example: ??? spell out, figure out, hold up, brace up, size up, rope in, back up, step down, miss out on, kick around, cash in, rain out, check in and check out, fill in, kick in, square off, <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

sock in, sock away, factor in, come down with, give up on, lay off (from employment), run into and across, stop by, pass up, put up, set up, trade in, pick up on, pick up after; in a few cases the preposition was prefixed such as offset, downplay, downshift, overkill, update???. ?.

? The? Developing? Tendency? of? American? English? and? British? English
Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a “ world language”, the lingua franca of the modern era. While English is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. Some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural sign of “ native English speakers”, but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications. English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee. English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union (by 89% of schoolchildren), followed by French (32%), German (18%), and Spanish (8%). Among non-English speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the population claimed to be able to converse in English in the Netherlands (87%), Sweden (85%), Denmark (83%), Luxembourg (66%), Finland (60%), Slovenia (56%), Austria (53%), Belgium (52%), and Germany (51%).

Norway and Iceland also have a large majority of competent English-speakers. A. The Influence of American English Britain made English an international language in the nineteenth century with its imperialism power, but Americans have been the driving force behind its globalization in the <https://assignbuster.com/the-lexical-differences-between-american-english-and-british-english/>

twentieth century. A great deal of examples of the influence of American English can be found in a large number of current books, magazines, movies, even the young generation in Britain is influenced by American English. Despite the influence of experts and English teachers from Britain, Europeans ??? are subjected to a massive amount of American English???, which many students are much more interested in. The influence of American English include the fact that young people in Europe, Asia and Russia use it in daily conversation, even when many of them have been taught British English. In Brazil, people demand for courses in American style rather than British. 11 This is because American English is infiltrating the territories formerly known to be the territory of British English influence, for example, Nigeria, Egypt, Thailand, and more forcefully penetrating Latin America, Japan, and South Korea.

Americanized words, like guy, campus, movie that do not exist in British English, now widely used. Today even the BBC, which has long used British English speaking announcers exclusively, now added American announcers in its broadcasts, especially in programs that go to countries like South Korea, where American English is favored. B. The Leading Position of American English What kind of language should we learn, American English or British English There is no definite answer for it. If one wants to make a research into British society and natural science for its long historical literature or culture, to study British English will be appropriate, or American English is better. According to an authoritative estimate, 70% of the roughly 350 million native English speakers speak the American version of English.

This seemingly gives the American English many more advantages. The causes of the unprecedented expansion of American English include the post-World War II military and technological advancement. They are for demographic, political reasons, or have to do with the computer and the Internet, the mass media, trade, the Peace Corps, and immigration policies. The last few decades have witnessed an ever-increasing political domination of America on the planet. This status was further reinforced in the late 1980s by the fall of communism, which resulted in the US penetrating and consolidating its position in formerly socialist territories.

The lead of the US in the computer and Internet industry has long been established. Bill Gates and other computer geniuses are Americans; they create everything by Americanism. As a consequence of the US domination of computer industry, the favored language of this industry is American English, which forces people to use American computer hardware and software to accept the American English, either consciously or unconsciously. American radio and television networks are spread all over the world.

It was reported that, as recently as 1993, the United States controlled 75% of the world's television programming, beaming Sesame Street to Lagos, Nigeria, for example. The Voice of America and CNN have no competitors all over the world over. The trade with the US has steadily risen in volume over the past few years, even in territories formerly controlled by Britain. The Peace Corps, founded by President J. F. Kennedy in 1962, has been a major cause of spreading American English to all over the world.

The Peace Corps volunteers have been working in the medical sector, in agriculture, and very significantly in English language teaching, leaving prevailing influence of American English after their returning back. People sense that they tend to find help from friends and relatives living in the United States. The recent policy, enacted by the US, of the visa program to ??? recruit??? 50, 000 new immigrants to the States each year has increased the number of immigrates to the US. The long-term reaction of the large migration to the States on the Americanization of English in native countries of the immigrants is obvious; the immigrants continue to communicate with their friends and relatives back in their homeland, and many eventually come back and settle there. The thing mentioned above is the story of the baby version of an English language that has grown and is threatening to shake the domination of the British English. This phenomenon could hardly been seen elsewhere. Neither the case with Canadian, Belgian or Swiss French in relation to the French of France, nor with Latin American Spanish or Portuguese in relation to the Spanish or Portuguese of Spain or Portugal, respectively. The speaker, and especially the learner, of English are now faced with the task of managing the co-existence of the two competing languages.

However, it is hard to change the leading position of American English.

Conclusion There exist differences between the two variants??” American English and British English, just as many differences in the variants within themselves. Through discussion of their historical background and some main reasons including being in different regions, borrowing words in different situations, political and ideological revolting against British

government in America, this paper gives readers a general knowledge about American English and British English and the tendency of the two variants. What??™s more, they will know what kind of English they would like to learn.

Although there are definitely many difference between the two. We should realize that Amercian English is merely one variety of the English labguage. By making a contrastive analysis, we dont mean to claim one variety is more prestigious than the other. We hust hold that objective contrast can lead us towards better EnglishNOTE 1 McMahon . M . S, An introduction to English phonology (Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 145 2 Nist A John, A Structural History of English (Italy: Martins Press, 1987), 234 3 Geoffrey Hughes, A history of English words (Washington:?? Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 103 4 Wolfram Walt, American English: dialects and variation (NEW YORK: Natalie Schilling-Estes, 2006), 76 5 Algeo John, British Or American English: A Handbook of Word and Grammar Patterns (England: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 256 6 Jackson Howard, Words, meaning, and vocabulary: an introduction to modern English lexicology (Continuum International Publishing Group Press, 2000), 216 7 Strevens P, British and American English (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1978), 114 9 Mark John, Lexicographic description of English (Chicago: John Benjamins Publishing Company , 1986), 89 10???, ???????????,?:??????????, 2001,? 76? 11???, ?????????????????,?:??????????, 2005,? 134? 12 M Kyto, Variation and diachrony, with early American English in focus: studies on can/may and shall/will (NEW YORK: Language Variation and Change, 1993), 236 13 Joseph P. Olive, Acoustics of American English speech: a dynamic approach (Los Angeles: Springer, 1993), 123 14 RK Tongue, The English of Singapore and

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