



BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH - A COMPARATIVE DIFFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

English language is the most well documented language and there are of course various varieties of English such as Scottish, South African, Australian, British and American etc. All these types of English, American English and the British English are the most of these two types of English's are famous because of the large number of people who used them for communication. Basically, American English is a modification of British English because of the fact that, the British taught American English when they were their slaves but as the time passed and American got independence from the British a change in the style of Americans language was observed. And today in 2017, we can say that, there is lot of difference between both the forms of English both grammatically and spoken. There is an old saying that America and Britain are "two nations divided by a common language." In this article we are giving a comparative difference between British and American English.

KEYWORDS: British English, American English, National Language, Regional Language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, we usually come across many a languages which are used widely by the people. Some of these languages are Hindi, English, Mandarin (Chinese) etc. There are various languages which are used by the people of different regions in a single country itself, apart from the National language. English language plays a vital role in our day today lives, only due to its universal feature, i.e people of two different nationalities know their own native languages very well but are not knowing about each others language (native) so English language becomes the medium of their communication.

No one knows exactly who said this, but it reflects the way many Brits feel about American English. My British friend still tells me, "You don't speak English. You speak American."

II. COMPARISON

a) Vocabulary

The most noticeable difference between American and British English is vocabulary. There are hundreds of everyday words that are different. For example, Brits call the front of a car the bonnet, while Americans call it the hood.

Americans go on vacation, while Brits go on holidays, or hols.

New Yorkers live in apartments; Londoners live in flats.

There are far more examples than we can talk about here. Fortunately, most Americans and Brits can usually guess the meaning through the context of a sentence.

b) Collective nouns

There are a few grammatical differences between the two varieties of English. Let's start with collective nouns. We use collective nouns to refer to a group of individuals.

In American English, collective nouns are singular. For example, staff refers to a group of employees; band refers to a group of musicians; team refers to a group of athletes. Americans would say, "The band is good."

But in British English, collective nouns can be singular or plural. You might hear someone from Britain say, "The team are playing tonight" or "The team is playing tonight."

c) Auxiliary verbs

Another grammar difference between American and British English relates to auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs, also known as helping verbs, are verbs that help form a grammatical function. They "help" the main verb by adding information about time, modality and voice.

Let's look at the auxiliary verb shall. Brits sometimes use shall to express the future.

For example, "I shall go home now." Americans know what shall means, but rarely use it in conversation. It seems very formal. Americans would probably use "I will go home now."

In question form, a Brit might say, "Shall we go now?" while an American would probably say, "Should we go now?"

When Americans want to express a lack of obligation, they use the helping verb do with negative not followed by need. "You do not need to come to work today." Brits drop the helping verb and contract not. "You needn't come to work today."

d) Past tense verbs

You will also find some small differences with past forms of irregular verbs.

The past tense of learn in American English is learned. British English has the option of learned or learnt.

The same rule applies to dreamed and dreamt, burned and burnt, leaned and leant.

Americans tend to use the -ed ending; Brits tend to use the -t ending.

In the past participle form, Americans tend to use the -en ending for some irregular verbs. For example, an American might say, "I have never gotten caught" whereas a Brit would say, "I have never got caught." Americans use both got and gotten in the past participle. Brits only use got.

Don't worry too much about these small differences in the past forms of irregular verbs. People in both countries can easily understand both ways, although Brits tend to think of the American way as incorrect.

e) Tag questions

A tag question is a grammatical form that turns a statement into a question. For example, "The whole situation is unfortunate, isn't it?" or, "You don't like him, do you?"

The tag includes a pronoun and its matching form of the verb be, have or do. Tag questions encourage people to respond and agree with the speaker. Americans use tag questions, too, but less often than Brits. You can learn more about tag questions on a previous episode of Everyday Grammar.

III. NOT SO DIFFERENT AFTER ALL

British and American English have far more similarities than differences. We think the difference between American and British English is often exaggerated. If you can understand one style, you should be able to understand the other style.

With the exception of some regional dialects, most Brits and Americans can understand each other without too much difficulty. They watch each other's TV shows, sing each other's songs, and read each other's books.

They even make fun of each other's accents.

I'm Jill Robbins.

And I'm John Russell.

And I'm Claudia Milne.

IV. CONCLUSION

The English language was first introduced to the Americas by British colonization, beginning in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The language also spread to numerous other parts of the world as a result of British trade and colonisation and the spread of the former British Empire, which, by 1921, included about 470–570 million people, about a quarter of the world's population. Written forms of British and American English as found in newspapers and textbooks vary little in their essential features, with only occasional noticeable differences. Finally An important point to make is that different doesn't mean wrong. Comments such as "American English is inferior to British English", or "American English is better than British English" have no solid basis other than the speaker's opinion. The truth is that no language or regional variety of language is inherently better or worse than another.

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