

VARIANTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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It is known that England and America are two countries separated by a common language. Since the Americas were colonized over 400 years ago, the form of English used in the United States has deviated from that used in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the form of English used in the United Kingdom is called British English, and the form of English used in the United States is called American English. To this point we have been dealing with the vocabulary of the English language as if there were only one variety of this language. Now we are going to turn to the details in which the language of some English speakers differs from that of others, we shall see what varieties of the language in question there are and how they are interconnected.

It should be mentioned that 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. We shall be concerned here with the territorial variations, the others being the domain of stylistics. For historical and economic reasons the English language has spread over vast territories. It is the national language of England proper, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and some provinces of Canada. It is the official language in Wales, Scotland, in Gibraltar and on the island of Malta. The English language was also at different times enforced as an official language on the peoples who fell under British rule or US domination in Asia, Africa and Central and South America. The population of these countries still spoke their mother tongue or had command of both languages. After World War II as a result of the national liberation movement throughout Asia and Africa many former colonies have gained independence and in some of them English as the state language has been or is being replaced by the national language of the people inhabiting these countries (by Hindi in India, Urdu in Pakistan, etc.) though by tradition it retains there the position of an important means of communication. It is natural that the English language is not used with uniformity in the British Isles and in Australia, in the USA and in New Zealand, in Canada and in India, etc. The English language also has some peculiarities in Wales, Scotland, in other parts of the British Isles and America.

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. Dialects are varieties of a language used as a means of oral communication in small localities, they are set off (more or less sharply) from other varieties by some distinctive features of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Close inspection of the varieties mentioned above reveals that they are essentially different in character. It is not difficult to establish that the varieties spoken in small areas are local dialects. The status of the other varieties is more difficult to establish.

It is over half a century already that the nature of the two main variants of the English language, British and American (Br and AE) has been discussed. Some American linguists, H. L. Mencken for one, speak of two separate languages with a steady flood of linguistic influence first (up to about 1914) from Britain to America, and since then from America to the British Isles. They even proclaim that the American influence on British English is so powerful that there will come a time when the American standard will be established in Britain. Other linguists regard the language of the USA as a dialect of English. Still more questionable is the position of Australian English (*AuE*) and Canadian English (*CnE*). 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.

The variations in vocabulary, which will be discussed below, are not very numerous. Most of them are divergences in the semantic structure of words and in their usage. The dissimilarities in grammar like *AE* gotten, proven for *BE* got, proved are scarce. For the most part these dissimilarities consist in the preference of this or that grammatical category or form to some others. For example, the preference of Past Indefinite to Present Perfect, the formation of the Future Tense with will as the only auxiliary verb for all persons, and some others. Recent investigations have also shown that the Present Continuous form in the meaning of Future is used twice as frequently in *BE* as in the

American, Canadian and Australian variants; infinitive constructions are used more rarely in *AE* than in *BE* and *AuE* and passive constructions are, on the contrary, more frequent in America than in Britain and in Australia.

Since *BE*, *AE* and *AuE* have essentially the same grammar system, phonetic system and vocabulary, we cannot regard them as different languages. Nor can we refer them to local dialects; because they serve all spheres of verbal communication in society, within their territorial area they have dialectal differences of their own; besides they differ far less than local dialects. Another consideration is that *AE* has its own literary norm *and AuE is developing one*. Thus we must speak of three variants of the English national language having different accepted literary standards, one spoken in the British Isles, another spoken in the USA, the third in Australia. As to *CnE*, its peculiarities began to attract linguistic attention only some 20 years ago. The fragmentary nature of the observation available makes it impossible *to determine its status*. Speaking about the lexical distinctions between the territorial variants of the English language it is necessary to mention that from the point of view of their modern currency in different parts of the English-speaking world all lexical units may be divided into **g e n e r a l E n g l i s h**, those common to all the variants and **locally-marked**, those specific to present-day usage in one of the variants and not found in the others (i.e. Britishisms, Americanisms, Australianisms, Canadianisms, etc.). When speaking about the territorial differences of the English language philologists and lexicographers usually *note the fact that* different variants of English use different words for the same objects. Thus in describing the lexical differences between the British and American variants they provide long lists of word pairs like *BE AE* flat – apartment, underground – subway, lorry–truck, pavement – sidewalk, post – mail, tin-opener – can-opener, government- administration, leader- editorial, teaching staff – faculty.

From such lists one may infer that the words in the left column are the equivalents of those given in the right column and used on the other side of the Atlantic. But the matter is not as simple *as that*. These pairs present quite different cases. It is only in some rare cases like tin-opener — can-opener or fishmonger — fish-dealer that the members of such pairs are semantically equivalent. In some cases a notion may have two synonymous designations used on both sides of the Atlantic ocean, but one of them is more frequent in

Britain, the other — in the USA. Thus in the pairs post — mail, timetable — schedule the first word is more frequent in Britain, the second — in America. So the difference here lies only in word frequency. Most locally-marked lexical units belong to partial Briticisms, Americanisms, etc., that is they are typical of this or that variant only in one or some of their meanings. Very often the meanings that belong to general English are common and neutral, central, direct, while the Americanisms are colloquial, marginal and figurative. There are also some full Briticisms, Americanisms, etc., i.e. lexical units specific to the British, American, etc. variant in all their meanings. For instance, the words fortnight, pillar-box are full Briticisms, campus, mail-boy are full Americanisms, outback, back-blocks are full Australianisms. These may be subdivided into lexical units denoting some realia that have no counterparts elsewhere (such as the Americanism junior high school) and those denoting phenomena observable in other English speaking countries but expressed there in a different way (e.g. campus is defined in British dictionaries as 'grounds of a school or college'). The number of lexical units denoting some realia having no counterparts in the other English-speaking countries is considerable in each variant. To these we may refer, for example, lexical units pertaining to such spheres of life as flora and fauna (e.g. *AuE* kangaroo, kaola, dingo), names of schools of learning (e.g. junior high school and senior high school in *AE* or composite high school in *CnE*), names of things of everyday life, often connected with peculiar national conditions, traditions and customs (e.g. *AuE* boomerang, *AE* drug-store, *CnE* float-house). But it should be pointed out that it is not the lexical units of this kind that can be considered distinguishing features of this or that variant. As the lexical units are the only means of expressing the notions in question in the English language some of them have become common property of the entire English-speaking community (as, e.g., drug-store, lightning rod, super-market, babysitter that extended from *AE*, or the hockey terms that originated in Canada (body-check, red-line, puck-carrier, etc.); others have even become international (as the former Americanisms motel, lynch, abolitionist, radio, cybernetics, telephone, anesthesia, or the former Australianisms dingo, kangaroo and cockatoo). The numerous locally-marked slangisms, professionalisms and dialectisms cannot be considered distinguishing features either, since they do not belong to the literary language. Less obvious, yet not less important, are the regional differences of another kind, the so-called

derivational variants of words, having the same root and identical in lexical meaning though differing in derivational affixes (e.g. *BE* aluminium — *AE* aluminum). Sometimes the derivational variation embraces several words of the same word-cluster. Compare, for example, the derivatives of race (division of mankind) in British and American English: *BE* racial/racist *a*, racist *n*, racialism *n* *AE* racist *a*, racist *n*, racialism/racism *n*. When speaking about the territorial lexical divergences it is not sufficient to bring into comparison separate words, it is necessary to compare lexico-semantic groups of words or synonymic sets, to study the relations within these groups and sets, because on the one hand a different number of members in a lexico-semantic group is connected with a different semantic structure of its members, on the other hand even insignificant modifications in the semantic structure of a word bring about tangible reshuffle in the structure of the lexico-semantic group to which the word belongs. For example, the British and Australian variants have different sets of words denoting inland areas: only inland is common to both, besides *BE* has interior, remote, etc., *AuE* has bush, outback, backblocks, back of beyond, back of Bourke and many others. Accordingly, the semantic structure of the word bush and its position in the two variants are altogether different: in *BE* it has one central meaning ('shrub') and several derived ones, some of which are now obsolete, in *AuE* it has two semantic centres ('wood' and 'inland areas') that embrace five main and four derived meanings.

We should mention that the lexical divergences between different variants of English have been brought about by several historical processes. It is known that the English language was brought to the American continent at the beginning of the 17th century and to Australia at the end of the 18th century as a result of the expansion of British colonialism. It is inevitable that on each territory in the new conditions the subsequent development of the language should diverge somewhat from that of British English. In the first place names for new animals, birds, fishes, plants, trees, etc. were formed of familiar English elements according to familiar English patterns. Such are mockingbird, bullfrog, catfish, peanut, sweet potato, popcorn that were coined in *AE* or dogger — 'professional hunter of dingoes', Bushman — 'Australian soldier in Boer War' formed in *AuE*. New words were also borrowed to express new concepts from the languages with which English came into contact on the new territories. At the same time quite a number of words lost in *BE* have survived on the other

continents and conversely, certain features of earlier *BE* that have been retained in England were lost in the new varieties of the language, changed their meaning or acquired a new additional one. Modern times are characterized by considerable leveling of the lexical distinctions between the variants due to the growth of cultural and economic ties between nations and development of modern means of communication. For example, a large number of Americanisms have gained currency in *BE*, some becoming so thoroughly naturalized that the dictionaries in England no longer mark them as aliens. The influx of American films, comics and periodicals resulted in the infiltration of American slang, e.g. gimmick — 'deceptive or secret device', to root — 'support or encourage a contestant or team, as by applauding or cheering', etc. Certain uses of familiar words, which some 50 years ago were peculiar to the US, are now either completely naturalized in Britain or evidently on the way to naturalization. Numerous examples will be found by noting the words and meanings indicated as American in dictionaries at the beginning of the century and in present days. At the same time a number of Britishisms have passed into the language of the USA, e.g. smog which is a blend of smoke and fog, to brief — 'to give instructions'. Sometimes the Britishisms adopted in America compete with the corresponding American expressions, the result being the differentiation in meaning or spheres of application, for example, unlike the American store, the word shop, taken over from across the ocean at the beginning of the 20th century is applied only to small specialized establishments (e.g. gift shop, hat shop, candy shop), or specialized departments of a department store (e.g. the misses' shop). British luggage used alongside American baggage in America differs from its rival in collocability (luggage compartment, luggage rack, but baggage car, baggage check, baggage room). In the pair autumn — fall the difference in *AE* is of another nature: the former is bookish, while the latter colloquial.

So we can conclude that British English, American English and Australian English are variants of the same language, because they are used in all spheres of verbal communication. Their structural peculiarities, 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 been established yet.

Key words: virtual, think tank, portal, higher education, leading and managing change, stakeholder, online, Bologna process, society in transition, standard, education area

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РАЗНОВИДНОСТИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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Работа посвящена исследованию разновидностей английского языка. В работе даётся общее представление о языковых различиях и особенностях, которые имеются в британском и американском английском, затрагиваются также языковые особенности канадского и австралийского английского.

В работе рассматриваются также грамматические особенности английского языка в вышеупомянутых странах, такие слова, которые характерны только для американского, британского и австралийского разновидностей, говорится также о словах, которые получили международное употребление. Было также изучено весомое влияние американского английского на британский английский. В результате исследования стало ясно, что британский, американский и австралийский английский, являясь разновидностями одного и того же языка, употребляются во всех сферах вербальной коммуникации. Языковые стандарты американского и авс-тралийского английского в некоторой степени отличаются от языковых норм британского английского языка, однако статус канадского английского пока не установлен.

ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆԻ ՏԱՐԱՏԵՍԱԿՆԵՐԸ

Ս. Մ. ԱՎԱԳՅԱՆ

ԳԴԴ դասախոս

Աշխատությունը նվիրված է անգլերենի տեսակների ուսումնասիրությանը: Այն գաղափար է հաղորդում լեզվական այն տարբերությունների և առանձնահատկությունների վերաբերյալ, որոնք առկա են բրիտանական և ամերիկյան անգլերեններում՝ անդրադառնալով նաև կանադական և ավստրիական անգլերենների լեզվական առանձնահատկություններին:

Աշխատության մեջ անդրադարձ է կատարվել նաև վերոնշյալ երկրներում առկա անգլերենի քերականական առանձնահատկություններին, այն բաներին, որոնք բացառապես ամերիկյան, բրիտանական և ավստրիական են և այն բաներին, որոնք միջազգային կիրառելիություն են ձեռք բերել: Դիտարկվել է նաև բրիտանական անգլերենի վրա առկա ամերիկյան անգլերենի ծանրակշիռ ազդեցությունը: Ուսումնասիրության արդյունքում պարզ է դարձել, որ բրիտանական, ամերիկյան և ավստրալիական ազգերները միևնույն լեզվի տեսակներն են և օգտագործվում են խոսքային հաղորդակցության բոլոր ոլորտներում: Ամերիկյան և ավստրալիական անգլերենների լեզվական չափանիշները որոշ չափով շեղվում են բրիտանական անգլերենի լեզվական նորմերից, սակայն կանադական անգլերենի կարգավիճակը դեռևս սահմանված չէ: