MODULE 2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE VARIETIES AND USAGE

UNIT 1 VARIETIES IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine the varieties of English usage which occur in a given country. The use of English is determined by certain factors such as the situation of usage, the medium of usage, the place of usage, the attitude in the usage and the person using the language. Since English language is a language acquired in a second language situation outside Britain, there are factors that determine the proper usage some of which affects the realization of a standard format of language usage. The varieties of English in use are the determining factors for preparing the method of teaching that will effectively transmit the required value for understanding the language and the effective method for transmitting the standard language form. The way English is used in the kindergarten is different from that of the tertiary. So, to properly transmit the language there must be patterned approaches that are determined by the variety in question and at what time. This should also be used in assessing language use since these factors determine the English in use.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the varieties of English in use ;
- understand the reason behind the varieties;
- distinguish the occurrence of variety;
- identify the variety suitable for every situation; and
- use the variety required in each situation.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The important point to stress is that English acquired by speakers of other languages, whether as a foreign or as a second language, varies not merely with the degree of proficiency attained (elementary, intermediate, advanced) but with the specific native language background. The Frenchman who says, '*I am here since Thursday*' is imposing a French grammatical usage on English; the Russian who says '*There are four assistants in our chair of mathematics*' is imposing a Russian lexico-semantic usage on the English word '*chair'*. Most obviously, we always tend to impose our native phonological pattern on any foreign language we learn. At the opposite extreme are interference varieties that are so wide-spread in a community and of such a long standing that they may be thought stable and adequate enough to be institutionalized and regarded as varieties of English in their own right rather than stages on the way to a more native-like English. There is active debate on these issues in India, Pakistan and several African countries, where efficient and fairly stable varieties of English are prominent in educated use at the highest political and professional level.

Two points need to be made clear. First, the various conditioning factors (region, medium, attitude, for example) have no absolute effect: one should not expect a consistent all-or-nothing response to the demands of informality or whatever the factor may be. The conditioning is real but

relative and variable. Secondly, when we have done all we can to account for the choice of one rather than another linguistic form, we are still left with a margin of variation that cannot be explained with certainty. For example, we can say (or write): *He stayed a week* or *He stayed for a week*; *two fishes* or *two fish*; *Had I known* or *If I had known* without either member of such pairs being necessarily linked to any of the varieties that we have specified. We may sometimes have a clear impression that one member seems rarer than another, or relatively old-fashioned, but although a rare or archaic form is likelier in relatively formal rather than in relatively informal English, we cannot always make such identification. It might be true for the plural *cacti* as opposed to *cactuses*, but it would hardly be true for *beer enough* as opposed to *enough beer*, where the former is rarer but probably more used in informal (or dialectal) speech.

Perhaps, English may give rise to such fluctuation more than some other languages because of its patently mixed nature: a basic Germanic *wordstock*, stress pattern, word-formation, inflection and syntax overlaid with a classical and Romance *wordstock*, stress pattern, word-formation -and even inflection and syntax. The extent to which even highly educated people will treat the Latin and Greek plurals in *data* and *criteria* as singulars or will use *different to* and *averse to* rather than *different from* and *averse from* - and face objections from other native speakers of English - testifies to the variable acknowledgement that classical patterns of inflection and syntax apply within English grammar. It is another sense in which English is to be regarded as according to Quirk *et al.* (1979) as 'the most international of languages' and certainly adds noticeably to the variation in English usage with which a grammar must come to terms.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the factors affecting the standardization of varieties in English usage.

3.2 Variety according to Subject Matter

Varieties according to the subject matter are sometimes referred to as 'registers', though this term is applied to different types of linguistic variety by different linguists. The theoretical bases for considering subject-matter varieties are highly debatable, but certain broad truths are clear enough. While one does not exclude the possibility that a given speaker may choose to speak in a national standard at one moment and in a regional dialect the next - and possibly even switch from one national standard to another - the presumption has been that an individual adopts one of the varieties so far discussed as his permanent

form of English. With varieties according to subject matter, on the other hand, the presumption is rather that the same speaker has a repertoire of varieties and habitually switches to the appropriate one as occasion arises. Naturally, however, no speaker has a very large repertoire, and the number of varieties he commands depends crucially upon his specific profession, training, range of hobbies, etc.

Most typically, perhaps, the switch involves nothing more than turning to the particular set of lexical items habitually used for handling the topic in question. Thus, in connection with repairing a machine: *nut, bolt, wrench, thread, lever, finger-tight, balance, adjust, bearing, axle, pinion, split-pin*, and the like. '*I am of course using thread in the engineer-ing sense, not as it is used in needlework*', one says. But there are grammatical correlates to subject-matter variety as well. To take a simple example, the imperatives in cooking recipes: 'Pour the yokes into a bowl', not 'You should' or 'You must' or 'You might care to', still less 'The cook should ...' More complex grammatical correlates are to be found in the language of technical and scientific description: the passive is common and clauses are often nominalized.

It need hardly be emphasized that the type of language required by choice of subject matter would be roughly constant against the variables (like dialect, national standard). Some obvious contingent constraints are however emerging: the use of a specific variety of one class frequently presupposes the use of a specific variety of another. The use of a well-formed legal sentence, for example, presupposes an educated variety of English. There are contingent constraints of another kind. Some subject-matter varieties of English (legal statutes especially) are difficult to compose except in writing, and difficult to understand, except by reading.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

English usage is sometimes determined by situations, professions and vocations. Explain varieties according to subject matter in this regard

3.3 Variety according to Medium

The only varieties according to medium that we need to consider are those conditioned by speaking and writing respectively. Since speech is the primary or natural medium for linguistic communication, it is reasonable to see the present issue as a statement of the differences imposed on language when it has to be couched in a graphic (and normally visual) medium instead. Most of these differences arise from two sources. One is situational: the use of a written medium normally presumes the absence of the person(s) to whom the piece of language is

addressed. This imposes the necessity of a far greater explicitness: the careful and precise completion of a sentence, rather than the odd word, supported by gesture, and terminating when the speaker is assured by word or look that his hearer has understood. As a corollary, since the written sentence can be read and re-read, slowly and critically, the writer tends to anticipate criticism by writing more concisely as well as more carefully and elegantly than he may choose to speak.

The second source of difference is that many of the devices we use to transmit language by speech (stress, rhythm, intonation, tempo, for example) are impossible to represent with the crudely simple repertoire of conventional orthography. This means that the writer has often to reformulate his sentences if he is to convey fully and successfully what he wants to express within the orthographic system. Thus, instead of the spoken sentence with a particular intonation nucleus: *Jŏhn didn't do it; one might have to write; It was not in fact John that did it.*

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

We write differently from the way we speak. Discuss English usage in formal and informal situations.

3.4 Variety according to Attitude

Varieties according to attitude constitute, like subject-matter and medium varieties, a range of English any section of which is in principle available at will to any individual speaker of English, irrespective of the regional variant or national standard he may habitually use. This present class of varieties is often called 'stylistic', but 'style' like 'register' is a term which is used with several different meanings. We are here concerned with the choice of linguistic form that proceeds from our attitude to the hearer (or reader), to the subject matter, or to the purpose of our communication. And we postulate that the essential aspect of the non-linguistic component (that is, the attitude) is the gradient between *stiff, formal, cold, impersonal* on the one hand and *relaxed, informal, warm,* and *friendly,* on the other. The corresponding linguistic contrasts involve both grammar and vocabulary. For example:

i. *Overtime emoluments are not available for employees who are non-resident...*

ii. *Staff members who don't live in can't get paid overtime...* While many sentences like the foregoing can be rated 'more formal' or 'more informal' ('colloquial') in relation to each other, it is useful to pursue the notion of the 'common core' here, so that we can acknowledge a median or unmarked variety of English,

bearing no obvious colouring that has been induced by attitude. As in:

iii. *This student's work is now much better and seems likely to go on improving* and thousands of sentences like it. On each side of this normal and neutral English, we may usefully distinguish sentences containing features that are markedly formal or informal. In the present work, we shall for the most part confine ourselves to this three-term distinction, leaving the middle one unlabelled and specifying only usages that are relatively formal or informal.

Mastery of such a range of attitudinal varieties seems a normal achievement for educated adults, but it is an acquisition that is not inevitable or even easy for either the native or the foreign learner of a language. It appears to require maturity, tact, sensitivity and adaptability - personality features which enable the individual to observe and imitate what others do, and to search the language's resources to find expression to suit his attitude. The young native speaker at the age of five or six has, broadly speaking, one form of English that is made to serve all purposes, whether he is talking to his mother, his pets, his friends or the aged president of his father's firm. And although even this can cause parents twinges of embarrassment, it is understood that the invariant language is a limitation that the child will grow out of.

The foreign learner is in a somewhat similar position. Until his skill in the language is really very advanced, it is attitudinally invariant, though the particular variety on which he is 'fixed' is much less predictable than that of the native child. If much of his practice in English has been obtained through textbooks specializing in commercial training, his habitual variety will be very different from that of the learner who has done vacation work helping on a farm. These are extreme examples, but it is a commonplace to notice an invariant literary, archaic flavour in the speech of foreign students, and even a Biblical strain in the students from some parts of the world. Better this no doubt than an excessively informal usage, but in any case just as the native child's youth protects him from criticism so does the overseas student's accent inform his listeners that there are respectable reasons for any inappropriateness in the language variety he uses.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

English usage is determined by individual knowledge and style in the language. Discuss

3.5 Variety according to Interference

English language varieties are full of interferences from the L_2 users of the language. Therefore, English as second language and English as foreign language users are prone to interferences from the L_1 and the existing corrupt versions of the language. Thus, most of these varieties strive towards a national standard where inferences are absorbed as part of the national English identity. Varieties according to interference should be seen as being on a very different basis from the other types of variety discussed. It is true that, theoretically, they need not be so sharply distinguished as this implies. We might think of the 'common core' in native speakers being 'distorted' in one direction where a person is born in Lagos and in another direction if he is born in Warri. The differences in their English might then be ascribed to the interference of Lagos speech and Warri speech respectively on this common core.

But in more practical terms, we apply 'interference' to the trace left by someone's native language upon the foreign language he has acquired. Indeed, to be still more severely practical, we apply it only to those traces of the first language that it is pedagogically desirable to identify and eradicate. Otherwise, we should be applying an identical classification to linguistic situations that are sharply different: on the one hand, the recognizable features of Indian English or West African English which teachers may be trying to eradicate and replace with speech habits more resembling BrE or AmE; and on the other hand, the recognizable features of Irish English (many of which are the reflexes of Irish Celtic), which are also passed on from one generation to another but which are approved by teachers as fully acceptable in educated Irish use.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

The variety of English in use is sometimes affected by interferences with other varieties. Explain this from you reading of this section

4.0 CONCLUSION

In presenting varieties, reference was made to each stratum of varieties being equally related to all others. In principle, this is so. A man may retain recognizable features of any regional English in habitually using a national standard; in his national standard, he will be able to discourse in English appropriate to his profession, his hobbies; he could handle these topics in English appropriate either to speech or writing; in either medium, he could adjust his discourse on any of these subjects according to the respect, friendliness or intimacy he felt for hearer or

reader. And all of this would be true if he was proficient in English as a foreign or second language and his usage bore the marks of his native tongue. Clearly, as we review this example, we must see that the independence of the varieties is not solely a matter of principle but also, to a large extent, a matter of actual practice.

5.0 SUMMARY

As with the English dictated by subject matter and medium, there are contingency constraints in the normal selection of attitudinal variety. Just as statute drafting (subject matter) normally presupposes writing (medium), so also it presupposes a particular attitude variety: in this case 'rigid'. Similarly it would be hard to imagine an appropriate football commentary on the radio being other than informal, or a radio commentary on the funeral of a head of state being other than formal, though both are in the same medium (speech).There are, after all, thousands of different languages in the world, and it is in the nature of language that each one seems uniquely important to those who speak it as their native language - that is, their first (normally sole) tongue: the language they acquired at their mother's knee. But there are more objective standards of relative importance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

i. Most English varieties are products of education. Discuss thoroughly.
ii. The style of one's writing is a variety on its own. Assess this statement.
iii. Interference results in pidgins and creoles. Defend this statement?
iv. Variety according to subject matter is related to vocations. Which linguistic form results from this variety?
v. Varieties make standardization impossible. How true is this statement?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Crystal, D. and Davy, D.(1969).*Investigating English Style*. London: Longman.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. and Svartvik, J. (1979).*A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Oxford University Press.

UNIT 2 BRITISH ENGLISH VARIETIES

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the characteristic content of a variety of English Language which has been recognized as the internationally acceptable variety from where the other varieties developed. British English (BE) is the mother-tongue English since it is the English spoken by people living in the United Kingdom and from our studies in the historical development of the language in Module one, it is the Britons that had the colonial experience that led to the emergence of English language in all facets. In this unit, we shall study the nature of BE, the phonological and morphological characteristics, and the other forms of the English variety which have emerged in the sociolinguistic usage of the English language variety.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the major linguistic thrust of British English;
- realize that British English is the mother-tongue English;
- understand the characteristics of Received Pronunciation (RP);
- acknowledge the existence of King's/Queen's English as a part of BE; and
- recognize the other varieties of British English as used in the United Kingdom.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.

c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

British English (BrE, BE, en-GB) is the broad term used to distinguish the forms of the English language used in the United Kingdom from the other forms used elsewhere in the Anglophone world. British English encompasses usages of English within Great Britain and Ireland, though in the case of Ireland, there are further distinctions peculiar to Hiberno-English. There are slight regional variations in formal written English in the United Kingdom (for example, although the words *wee* and *little* are interchangeable in some contexts, one is more likely to see *wee* written by a Scottish or Northern Irish person than by someone from Southern England or Wales). Nevertheless, there is a meaningful degree of uniformity in written English within the United Kingdom, and this could be described as "British English". The forms of spoken English, however, vary considerably more than in most other areas of the world where English is spoken and a uniform concept of "British English" is therefore more difficult to apply to the spoken language.

Regarding the Standardisation of British English as with English around the world, the English language as used in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is governed by convention rather than formal code since the authoritative dictionaries (like *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Chambers Dictionary*, *Collins Dictionary* etc.) record usage rather than prescribe it. In addition, vocabulary and usage change with time; words are freely borrowed from other languages and other strains of English, and neologisms are frequent. For historical reasons dating back to the rise of London in the 9th century, the form of language spoken in London and the East Midlands became Standard English within the Court, and ultimately became the basis for generally accepted use in the law, government, literature and education within Britain. Largely, modern British spelling was standardised in Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), although previous writers had also played a significant role in this and much has changed since 1755. Scotland, which underwent parliamentary union with England only in 1707, still has a few independent aspects of standardisation, especially within its autonomous legal system. The form of English taught across Europe is mainly that used in England and the subject is simply called "English";

the European Commission does not specify any specific English in its list of official languages but the English used in the member states of the United Kingdom is what is assumed and used.

RP English is often believed to be based on Southern accents, but in fact it has most in common with the dialects of the south-east Midlands: Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire. Migration to London in the 14th and 15th centuries was mostly from the counties directly north of London rather than those directly south. According to Fowler's *Modern English Usage* (1965), the term is "the Received Pronunciation". The word ‘received’ conveys its original meaning of accepted or approved- as in "received wisdom". There are differences both within and among the three counties mentioned, but a conglomeration emerged in London, and also mixed with some elements of Essex and Middlesex speech. By the end of the 15th century, Standard English was established in the City of London.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the relationship between Standard English and British English in the United Kingdom.

3.2 Received Pronunciation

a. Background of RP

There seems to be some disagreement as to the origins of the term "received" in the phrase, "Received Pronunciation", but both A.J. Ellis’ *On Early English Pronunciation*, 1869-1889 and John Walker’s *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* and *Expositor of the English Language* of 1791 are among the possibilities for its early appearance. However, Daniel Jones has been described as the "great describer and codifier of the Received Pronunciation of English". Regardless of its exact origins, the term "received" originally meant "that which is generally accepted" or "that accepted by the best society."

RP has for many years epitomized the "top end of the scale" of British English and it is what English people have traditionally meant when they’ve said that someone "hasn’t got an accent." It remains that RP is often regarded as a "neutral" and often "correct" accent. It is also referred to under the terms "BBC English," "Public School English" or even "Standard English. RP is also the accent that Americans and possibly other foreigners would likely refer to as the typical British accent. It should also be noted that there is no single accent whose role and status in the United States correspond to that of RP in England.

A number of distinctions even within RP have, over the years, been proposed by various linguists. These include "Mainstream" RP, "Upper crust" RP, "Adoptive" RP, "Near" RP, "Conservative" RP, and "General" RP." Wales (1994) differentiates between them in saying that "conservative" RP is often spoken by the older generation, and "advanced" RP by the younger generation. Her discussion of the accents of the royal family is tagged "Queen's English". Regardless of the differences within RP, it is an accent commonly recognized and one that has been taught as the Standard English in schools for years. To an objective observer, the *intrusive r* is very prevalent in RP. It involves the *insertion of an r-sound* at the end of a word ending in a non-high vowel where the next word begins with a vowel. Examples:

i. R pronounced *put a comma[r]*
the idea[r] of
I saw[r] it happen

ii. R not pronounced: a comma may be added
idea for
I saw them

The development of *intrusive r* is one of the consequences of *r-lessness* that developed in more modern British dialects.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically explain the major characteristics of Received Pronunciation (RP) English.

3.3 King's/Queen's English

a. Background of "Queen's" English

The notion of the "Queen's" English or "King's" English, depending on who is the ruler of the time, can be traced back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where the idea that the monarch's usage of the language should be a model in speech and writing (Wales, 1991). During these times there was a development of a prestigious speech associated with the court and aristocracy. Wales (1991) also points out that the phrase "The King's English" was first used during the reign of James I. The British Royal Family would generally be considered to be speakers of the Standard English, RP. However, Wales (1991) differentiates between the way the older "royals" speak and the changes that can be seen in the speech of younger members of the royal family.

The accents of the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret (the Queen's sister) reflect the conservative RP as epitomized by the old British films and newsreels of the first part of the century. The younger members of the royal family such as Prince Edward, Prince Andrew and the in-laws of the family, the Duchess of York (Fergie) as well as the late Princess of Wales (Diana), all speak an RP closer to "advanced" RP than to the conservative, more traditional accent. The distance between the Royal Family and the "subjects" of the country was seen to be enhanced by the traditional speech of the royals. As the younger members of the Royal Family attempt to close the gap between the two, their speech reflects the changes. There are also linguistic features traditionally associated with Cockney being found in the speech of the younger generation. Word-final glottal stops (there's a lo' of I' about') have been heard in the speech of Diana, Princess of Wales and Prince Edward, the Queen's youngest son.

b. General Pronunciation

The Queen and Older Royals might pronounce the following words as noted. Examples:

house = hice
off = orf
tower = tar
refined = refained

Younger royals might exhibit the following types of pronunciations:
really = rairly
milk = miuk
yes = yah
St. Paul's = St. Pauw's

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Assess and discuss the factors that gave rise to Kings/Queens English varieties in the United Kingdom

3.4 Other BrE Varieties

The size of the British Isles often leads people to assume that the language spoken in its countries of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland is somewhat homogeneous and first time visitors are often surprised to find that they have difficulty in understanding the accents and dialects of certain regions. Even within the country of England alone there is great diversity of dialect both regionally and socially. Accents are clues to where people were born and where they grew up.

Although some people may change the way they speak during their lifetimes, most people "carry at least some trace" of their accent and dialect origins throughout their lives. In addition to the regional accents of England, there can also be class differences reflected in the different accents.

In Britain, "people are often able to make instant and unconscious judgements about a stranger's class affiliation on the basis of his or her accent." Both the words and pronunciation of many individuals reflect that person's social position. It is agreed that in England, the "phonetic factors assume a predominating role which they do not generally have in North America". By definition, any regional accent would not be considered upper-class and the more localizable the accent, the more it can be describe as a "broad" accent. In Britain the middle class is associated with having not only a standard accent, but with also speaking in a more "formal and abstract style than working class."

Accents are often characterized by British speakers themselves as either "posh" or "common" accents. Most speakers of British English would recognize these labels and create a fairly accurate image of the sound of these far ends of the spectrum, Conservative or U-"Received Pronunciation" representing the "posh" end and a less broad version of Cockney representing the "common" accent. The significance of accents and their cultural and social associations is well represented in films and on television in Britain. The critically acclaimed 1964 file *My Fair Lady* based on George Bernard Shaw's 1912 play, *Pygmalion,* is often referenced in linguistic discussions as a wonderful example of how social class and accent were, and are still, inextricably linked in Britain. Over the past years, numerous television series have also provided viewers with a glimpse of the lives and accents of the Cockney population of London.

As language change continues to take place within Britain and within England, there are some who claim that a relatively newly established accent, "Estuary English" (EE) is due to replace the traditional educated accent of England Received Pronunciation" (RP). Estuary English is reported to be used by speakers who constitute the social "middle ground".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

"Most British English Varieties are accent based". How true is this statement?

4.0 CONCLUSION

British English today is assessed with RP standard. The overall RP as indicated earlier has three different forms: Conservative RP, Mainstream RP and Contemporary (or Advanced) RP. Conservative RP refers to a traditional accent which is associated with older speakers and the aristocracy. This is sometimes known as "High British". RP is not the accent of any particular locality, yet it is closer to the native accent of some counties than others. A strong RP accent usually indicates someone who went to a public school. Mainstream RP is an accent that is often considered neutral regarding age, occupation or lifestyle of the speaker, whilst Contemporary RP refers to speakers using features typical of younger-generation speakers. However, these days, there is almost no difference between those two. The modern style of RP is the usual accent taught to non-native speakers learning British English. Non-RP Britons abroad may modify their pronunciation to something closer to Received Pronunciation, in order to be understood better by people who themselves learned RP in school. They may also modify their vocabulary and grammar to be closer to Standard English, for the same reason. RP is used as the standard for English in most books on general phonology and phonetics and is represented in the pronunciation schemes of most dictionaries.

5.0 SUMMARY

For many years, the use of Received Pronunciation was considered to be a trait of education. It was a standard practice until around the 1950s for university students with regional accents to modify their speech to be closer to RP. As a result, at a time when only around five percent of the population attended universities, elitist notions sprang up around it and those who used it may have considered those who did not to be less educated than them. Received Pronunciation may be referred to as the Queen's (or King's) English, on the grounds that it is spoken by the monarch. It is also sometimes referred to as BBC English, because it was traditionally used by the BBC, yet nowadays this is slightly misleading. Queen Elizabeth II uses a specific form of English, and the BBC is no longer restricted to one type of accent, nor is "Oxbridge" (the universities of Oxford and Cambridge).The RP is a form of pronunciation, not a dialect (a form of vocabulary and grammar). It may show a great deal about the social and educational background of a person who uses English. A person using the RP will typically speak Standard English although the reverse is not necessarily true. In recent decades, many people have asserted the value of other regional and class accents, and many members (particularly young ones) of the groups that traditionally used Received Pronunciation have used it less, to varying degrees. Many regional accents are now heard on the BBC.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

i. Explain in details the nature of British English?
ii. "Received Pronunciation is more of educated accent than a standard variety" Explain this proposition?
iii. "The British English varieties are reflections of the social setting in the United Kingdom" How true is this statement?
iv. "Accents determine most British varieties in terms of class and region". Assess this truism

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

McArthur, Tom. (1975).*The Oxford Guide to World English*. Oxford: OUP.

Fowler, Roger. (1965). *Modern English Usage*. London: Longman.

Wales, Katie. (1991).*A Dictionary of Stylistic Terms*. London: Longman.

UNIT 3 AMERICAN ENGLISH STRUCTURE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study American English variety, its characteristics, emergence and usage. It is pertinent to state that the English in use in America is an offshoot of standard British English since the mainstream politicians and early immigrants to America were from Europe and their basic language was English. However, the English language in America is conditioned to carry the American way of communication, attitude and culture. British and American English shared similar linguistic forms except certain differences which we will enumerate and discuss in further modules in this course. We shall discus the historical development of this variety and the contemporary position of this variety amongst the vast emerging varieties of English worldwide.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- trace the origin of American English variety;
- understand the emergence of General America (GA) as a variety;
- discuss the major characteristics of the language;
- distinguish between American English and other varieties; and
- assess the linguistic differences in the variety.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.

d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The English language as used in the United States is American English (AmE, AE, AmEng, USEng, en-US), also known as United States English or U.S. English. It is a set of dialects of the English language used mostly in the United States. It is estimated that approximately two thirds of native speakers of English live in the United States. 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 Dutch, French, German, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Finnish, as well as numerous Native American languages. While written AmE is standardized across the country, there are several recognizable variations in the spoken language, both in pronunciation and in vernacular vocabulary.

Historical Background

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 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 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, and punctuation, idioms, formatting of dates and numbers, and so on. 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 in 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"; 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." (*The Canterville Ghost*, 1888) 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 (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.

After the Civil War, the settlement of the western territories by migrants from the Eastern U.S. led to dialect mixing and leveling, so that regional dialects are most strongly differentiated along the Eastern seaboard. The Connecticut River and Long Island Sound is usually regarded as the southern/western extent of New England speech, which has its roots in the speech of the Puritans from East Anglia who settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Potomac River generally divides a group of Northern coastal dialects from the beginning of the Coastal Southern dialect area; in between these two rivers several local variations exist, chief among them the one that prevails in and around New York City and northern New Jersey, which developed on a Dutch substratum after the British conquered New Amsterdam. The main features of Coastal Southern speech can be traced to the speech of the English from the West Country who settled in Virginia after leaving England at the time of the English Civil War, and to the African influences from the African Americans who were enslaved in the South.

Although no longer region-specific, African American Vernacular English, which remains prevalent among African Americans, has a close relationship to Southern varieties of AmE and has greatly influenced everyday speech of many Americans. A distinctive speech pattern was also generated by the separation of Canada from the United States, centered on the Great Lakes region. This is the Inland North Dialect—the "standard Midwestern" speech that was the basis for General American in the mid-20th Century (although it has been recently modified by the northern cities vowel shift). In the interior, the situation is very different. West of the Appalachian Mountains begins the broad zone of what is generally called "Midland" speech. This is divided into two discrete subdivisions, the North Midland that begins north of the Ohio River valley area, and the South Midland speech; sometimes the

former is designated simply "Midland" and the latter is reckoned as "Highland Southern." The North Midland speech continues to expand westward until it becomes the closely related Western dialect which contains Pacific Northwest English as well as the well-known California English, although in the immediate San Francisco area some older speakers do not possess the cot-*caught* merger and thus retain the distinction between words such as *cot* and *caught* which reflects a historical Mid-Atlantic heritage. Mormon and Mexican settlers in the West influenced the development of Utah English.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

"Written AmE is standardized across the country but there are several recognizable variations in the spoken language both in pronunciation and in vernacular vocabulary." Explain this statement with regards to the nature of American English varieties.

3.2 General American (GA)

General American (GA) is the name given to any American accent that is relatively free of noticeable regional influences. Written forms of American English are fairly well standardized across the United States. An unofficial standard for spoken American English has developed because of mass media and of geographic and social mobility. This standard is generally called a 'General American' or Standard Midwestern accent and dialect, and it can typically be heard from network newscasters, although local newscasters tend toward more parochial forms of speech. Despite this unofficial standard, regional variations of American English have not only persisted, but have actually intensified. Regional dialects in the United States typically reflect the elements of the language of the main immigrant groups in any particular region of the country, especially in terms of pronunciation and vernacular vocabulary. Scholars have mapped at least four major regional variations of spoken American English: Northern (really north-eastern), Southern, Midland, and Western. After the American Civil War, the settlement of the western territories by migrants from the east led to dialect mixing and leveling, so that regional dialects are most strongly differentiated in the eastern parts of the country that were settled earlier. Localized dialects also exist with quite distinct variations, such as in Southern Appalachia and New York City.

The South Midland or Highland Southern dialect follows the Ohio River in a generally southwesterly direction, moves across Arkansas and Oklahoma west of the Mississippi, and peters out in West Texas. It is a version of the Midland speech that has assimilated some coastal Southern forms (outsiders often mistakenly believe South Midland

speech and coastal South speech to be the same).The island state of Hawaii has a distinctive Hawaiian Pidgin. Dialect development in the United States has been notably influenced by the distinctive speech of such important cultural centers as Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Charleston, New Orleans, and Detroit, which imposed their marks on the surrounding areas. American English, unlike British English, seems loose in phonology, morphology and syntax. There is the intended simplicity in the language use in order to bridge the archaic and old model English lexis, vocabulary and syntactic models. General America is not easily recognizable among the general populace because American has a hybrid of races that live within it but those who are involved in official things like the parliament, politics, administration, marketing and business employ GA in the writing of memos, letters and official documents, while the broadcast media employ the same in the broadcast except when the need arises for a shift in language use. Generally, GA is to America what RP is to Britain but America is not class conscious in this usage like the British.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically assess the statement that “General American is beyond accent and region.”

3.3 American English Structure

North America has given the English lexicon many thousands of words, meanings, and phrases. Several thousand are now used in English as spoken internationally; others, however, died within a few years of their creation. 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* (from Algonquian). Other Native American loanwords, such as *wigwam* or *moccasin*, describe artificial objects in common use among Native Americans. The languages of the other colonizing nations also added to the American vocabulary, for instance, *cookie*, *cruller*, and *pit* (of a fruit) from Dutch; *levee*, *portage* "carrying of boats or goods," and (probably) *gopher* from French; *barbecue*, from Spanish.

Among the earliest and most notable regular "English" 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*, *watergap*, *cutoff*, *trail*, *timberline*, and *divide*. Already existing words such as *creek*, *slough*, *sleet*, and (in later use) *watershed*, received

new meanings that were unknown in England. Other noteworthy American toponyms are found among loanwords; for example, *prairie*, *butte* (French); *bayou* (Louisiana French); *coulee* (Canadian French, but used also in Louisiana with a different meaning); *canyon*, mesa, arroyo (Spanish); *vlei*, *kill* (Dutch, Hudson Valley).

The word *corn*, used in England to refer to wheat (or any cereal), came to denote the plant *Zea mays*, 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). Other notable farm related vocabulary additions were the new meanings assumed by *barn* (not only a building for hay and grain storage, but also for housing livestock) and *team* (not just the horses, but also the vehicle along with them), as well as, in various periods, the terms *range*, (corn) *crib, truck, elevator, sharecropping,* and *feedlot*.

Ranch, later applied to a house style, derives from Mexican Spanish; most Spanish contributions came indeed after the War of 1812, with the opening of the West. Among these are, other than toponyms, *chaps* (from chaparreras), *plaza, lasso, bronco, buckaroo*; examples of "English" additions from the cowboy era are *bad man, maverick, chuck* "food," and *Boot Hill*; from the California Gold Rush came such idioms as *hit pay dirt* or *strike it rich*. A couple of notable late 18th century additions are the verb *belittle* and the noun *bid*, both first used in writing by Thomas Jefferson.

With the new continent, developed new forms of dwelling, and hence a large inventory of words designating real estate concepts (*land office, lot, outlands, waterfront,* the verbs locate and relocate, betterment, addition, subdivision), types of property (log cabin, adobe in the 18th century; *frame house, apartment, tenement house, shack, shanty* in the 19th century; *project, condominium, townhouse, split-level, mobile home, multi-family* in the 20th century), and parts thereof (*driveway, breezeway, backyard, dooryard; clapboard, siding, trim, baseboard; stoop* (from Dutch), *family room, den; and, in recent years, HVAC, central air, walkout basement*. Ever since the American Revolution, a great number of terms connected with the U.S. political institutions have entered the language; examples are *run, gubernatorial, primary election, carpetbagger* (after the Civil War), *repeater, lame duck, and pork barrel*. Some of these are internationally used (e.g. *caucus, gerrymander, filibuster, exit poll*).

The rise of capitalism, the development of industry, and material innovations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries were the source of a massive stock of distinctive new words, phrases, and idioms. Typical examples are the vocabulary of railroading and transportation

terminology, ranging from names of roads (from *dirt roads* and *back roads* to *freeways* and *parkways*) to road infrastructure (*parking lot, overpass, rest area*), and from automotive terminology to public transit (e.g. in the sentence "riding the subway downtown"); such American introductions as *commuter* (from *commutation* ticket), *concourse*, to board (a vehicle), *to park, double-park, and parallel park* (a car), *double decker*, or the noun *terminal* have long been used in all dialects of English. Trades of various kinds have endowed (American) English with household words describing jobs and occupations (*bartender, longshoreman, patrolman, hobo, bouncer, bellhop, roustabout, white collar, blue collar, employee, boss* (from Dutch), *intern, busboy, mortician, senior citizen*), businesses and workplaces (*department store, supermarket, thrift store, gift shop, drugstore, motel, main street, gas station, hardware store, savings and loan, hock* (also from Dutch), as well as general concepts and innovations (*automated teller machine, smart card, cash register, dishwasher, reservation* (as at hotels), *pay envelope, movie, mileage, shortage, outage, blood bank*). Already existing English words—such as store, shop, dry goods, haberdashery, lumber—underwent shifts in meaning; some—such as mason, student, clerk, the verbs *can* (as in "canned goods"), *ship, fix, carry, enroll* (as in school), run (as in "run a business"), *release*, and *haul*—were given new significations, while others (such as tradesman) have retained meanings that disappeared in England.

From the world of business and finance came *breakeven, merger, delisting, downsize, disintermediation, bottom line*; from sports terminology came, *jargon aside, Monday-morning quarterback, cheap shot, game plan* (football); *in the ballpark, out of left field, off base, hit and run,* and many other idioms from baseball; gamblers coined *bluff, blue chip, ante, bottom dollar, raw deal, pass the buck, ace in the hole, freeze-out, showdown; miners coined bedrock, bonanza, peter out, pan out*, and the verb *prospect* from the noun; and *railroad men* are to be credited with *make the grade, sidetrack, head-on*, and the verb *railroad*. A number of Americanisms describing material innovations remained largely confined to North America: *elevator, ground, gasoline*; many automotive terms fall in this category, although many do not (*hatchback, SUV, station wagon, tailgate, motor home, truck, pickup truck, to exhaust*).

In addition to the above-mentioned loans from French, Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Dutch, and Native American languages, other accretions from foreign languages came with 19th and early 20th century immigration; notably, from Yiddish (*chutzpah, schmooze*, and such idioms as ‘need something like a hole in the head’) and German—*hamburger* and culinary terms like *frankfurter/franks, liverwurst, sauerkraut, wiener, deli*(*catessen*); *scram, kindergarten, gesundheit*;

musical terminology (*whole note, half note,* etc.); and apparently ‘cookbook’, fresh "impudent," and ‘what gives?’. Such constructions as ‘Are you coming with?’ and ‘I like to dance’ (for "I like dancing") may also be the result of German or Yiddish influence.

Finally, a large number of English colloquialisms from various periods are American in origin; some have lost their American flavour (from *OK* and *cool* to *nerd* and *24/7*), while others have not (‘have a nice day’, ‘sure’); many are now distinctly old-fashioned (*swell, groovy*). Some English words now in general use, such as *hijacking, disc jockey, boost, bulldoze,* and *jazz,* originated as American slang. Among the many English idioms of U.S. origin are ‘get the hang of’, ‘take for a ride’, ‘bark up the wrong tree’, ‘keep tabs’, ‘run scared’, ‘take a backseat’, ‘have an edge over’, ‘stake a claim’, ‘take a shine to’, ‘in /on the ground floor’, ‘bite off more than one can chew’, ‘off/on the wagon’, ‘stay put’, ‘inside track’, ‘stiff upper lip’, ‘bad hair day’, ‘throw a monkey wrench’, ‘under the weather’, ‘jump bail’, ‘come clean’, ‘come again?’, and ‘will the real x please stand up?’.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

From your understanding of the nature of American English, explain the major morphological influences in the development of the American lexicon.

4.0 CONCLUSION

American English is an offshoot of British English but with modifications resulting from the vast interactions between Americans and the native Americans (also known as Red Indians), and the surrounding nations like the Mexicans from Mexico, French from Canada, English from Canada and the Spaniards. Other languages like the language of the blacks which culminated in the existence of African-American English and accent also had its toll in the emergence of American English. Most regions in America have geographical accents that are identifiable. The Alaskans, the Californians, the Utahs, the Bostonians all have unique accents for communication. America has largely an accent based English and it is a nation that is not as class conscious as Britain where accents denote class, education or region.

General American (GA) resulted from the conscious need of every American towards creating a standard means of communicating in English without prejudice to regional accents and for ease of communication and interaction within official and administrative terrains. The emergence is akin to the British Received Pronunciation (RP) which is based mainly on class, education and region. The lexical

and syntactic properties of both seem identical, except some slight differences in the morphological development of each. The nature of American English reveals much borrowing, coinage and other forms of syntactic innovations. This means that AmE is always trying to become what BrE is not and in some cases the influence of AmE over BrE is prominent. A complete study of the differences between BrE and AmE will be treated in the preceding unit because BrE and AmE form the core of contemporary English usage.

5.0 SUMMARY

American English is a unique variety. It developed from BrE but its usage is assuming a wider dimension because of its acceptability and phonological patterns. American English has much influence in contemporary English Usage since much of the linguistic innovations result from science, technology, societal change, political experiences and other universal factors which America has been in the pivot. The rise of the Internet and the increasing demand for technological values truly affected American English and contemporary English usage worldwide. The steady use of General American in America reveals that conscious attempt by Americans to standardize their variety of English thereby avoiding the complex phonological and lexical traumas associated with Received Pronunciation (RP). It is also clearly explained here that American English is influencing British English in several ways thereby giving the other English varieties the choice of choosing the version of English suitable for international intelligibility.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions

i. Explain the factors that gave rise to American English?
ii. Discuss the rise of accents in American English?
iii. Assess the basic factors that gave rise to the emergence of General American?
iv. “American English is a mixture of borrowings and coinages”. Explain this statement
v. “American GA is accent conscious while British RP is class conscious”. Discuss this properly?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

McArthur, Tom (1975). *The Oxford Guide to World English*. Oxford: OUP.

Fowler, Roger (1965) *Modern English Usage*. London: Longman.

UNIT 4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRITISH ENGLISH (BrE) AND AMERICAN ENGLISH (AmE)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study the major differences between British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). British English is regarded as the world standard for teaching and learning but the vast influence of American English over the British model is enormous to the extent that the American model has been taught as British model in some cases. The reasons for this misplacement are not far-fetched. Most of the reasons will be treated in this unit so that the users of contemporary English would be able to identify such usage and accept them in the light of global acceptability. We shall study the differences from the lexical, syntactic, semantic, phonological and sociolinguistic perspectives. Each study is laden with adequate examples in order to reveal the vast differences between them and, to some extent, the similarities in the usage.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- identify each variety when used in texts;
- distinguish between BrE and AmE in contemporary usage;
- apply each variety consistently in speech and writing;
- recognize the similarities between the varieties; and
- use each variety according to situations and requirements

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

American English (AmE) and British English (BrE) differ at the levels of phonology, phonetics, vocabulary and, to a lesser extent, grammar and orthography. The first large American dictionary, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, was written by Noah Webster in 1828; Webster intended to show that the United States, which was a relatively new country at the time, spoke a different dialect from Britain. Differences in grammar are relatively minor, and normally do not affect mutual intelligibility; these include, but are not limited to: different use of some verbal auxiliaries; formal (rather than notional) agreement with collective nouns; different preferences for the past forms of a few verbs (e.g. *learn*, *burn*, *sneak*, *dive*, *get*); different prepositions and adverbs in certain contexts (e.g. AmE *in school*, BrE *at school*; and whether or not a definite article is used in a few cases (AmE *to the hospital*, BrE *to hospital*). Often, these differences are a matter of relative preferences rather than absolute rules; and most are not stable, since the two varieties are constantly influencing each other.

Differences in orthography are also fairly trivial. Some of the forms that now serve to distinguish American from British spelling (*color* for *colour*, *center* for *centre*, *traveler* for *traveller*, etc.) were introduced by Noah Webster himself; others are due to spelling tendencies in Britain from the 17th century until the present day (e.g. -ise for -ize, *programme* for *program*, *skilful* for *skillful*, *chequered* for *checkered*, etc.), in some cases favored by the *francophile* tastes of 19th century Victorian England, which had little effect on AmE. The most noticeable differences between AmE and BrE are at the levels of pronunciation and vocabulary.

A number of words and meanings that originated in Middle English or Early Modern English and that always have been in everyday use in the United States dropped out in most varieties of British English; some of these have cognates in Lowland Scots. Terms such as *fall* ("*autumn*"),

pavement (to mean "road surface", where in Britain, as in Philadelphia, it is the equivalent of "sidewalk"), *faucet, diaper, candy, skillet, eyeglasses, crib* (for a baby), *obligate*, and *raise a child* are often regarded as Americanisms. *Gotten* (past participle of get) is often considered to be an Americanism, although there are some areas of Britain, such as Lancashire and Yorkshire, that still continue to use it and sometimes also use *putten* as the past partiple for *put*. Other words and meanings, to various extents, were brought back to Britain, especially in the second half of the 20th century; these include hire ("to employ"), quit ("to stop," which spawned quitter in the U.S.), baggage, hit (a place), and the adverbs overly and presently ("currently"). Some of these, for example monkey wrench and wastebasket, originated in 19th-century Britain. The mandative subjunctive (as in "the City Attorney suggested that the case not be closed") is livelier in AmE than it is in British English; it appears in some areas as a spoken usage, and is considered obligatory in more formal contexts. The adjectives *mad* meaning "angry", *smart* meaning "intelligent" and *sick* meaning "ill" are also more frequent in American than British English.

British and American English are the reference norms for English as spoken, written, and taught in the rest of the world. For instance, the English-speaking members of the Commonwealth often closely follow British English forms while many new American English forms quickly become familiar outside of the United States. Although the dialects of English used in the former British Empire are often, to various extents, based on standard British English, most of the countries concerned have developed their own unique dialects, particularly with respect to pronunciation, idioms, and vocabulary; chief among them are Canadian English and Australian English, which rank third and fourth respectively in number of native speakers.

Formal and Notional Agreement

In BrE, collective nouns can take either singular (formal agreement) or plural (notional agreement) verb forms, according to whether the emphasis is, respectively, on the body as a whole or on the individual members; in AmE, collective nouns are usually singular in construction: *the committee was unable to agree*...AmE however may use plural pronouns in agreement with collective nouns: *the team takes their seats*, rather than *the team takes its seats*. The rule of thumb is that a group acting as a unit is considered singular and a group of "individuals acting separately" is considered plural. However, such a sentence would most likely be recast as *the team members take their seats*. Despite exceptions such as usage in the *New York Times*, the names of sports teams are usually treated as plurals even if the form of the name is singular. The difference occurs for all nouns of multitude, both general terms such as

team and company and proper nouns (for example, where a place name is used to refer to a sports team). For instance:

BrE: The Clash are a well-known band;
AmE: The Clash is a well-known band.
BrE: New York are the champions;
AmE: New York is the champion.

More so, proper nouns that are plural in form take a plural verb in both AmE and BrE; for example, *The Beatles are a well-known band*; *The Giants are the champions*.

The past tense and past participle of the verbs *learn*, *spoil*, *spell* (only in the word-related sense), burn, dream, smell, spill, leap, and others, can be either irregular (*learnt, spoilt*, etc.) or regular (*learned, spoiled*, etc.). In BrE, the irregular and regular forms are current; in some cases (*smelt, leapt*) there is a strong tendency towards the irregular forms (especially by speakers using Received Pronunciation); in other cases (*dreamed, leaned, learned*) the regular forms are somewhat more common. In AmE, the irregular forms are never or rarely used (except for *burnt* and *leapt*).

Nonetheless, as with other usages considered nowadays to be typically British, the 't' endings are often found in older American texts. However, usage may vary when the past participles are actually adjectives, as in 'burnt toast'. (Note that the two-syllable form learnèd /ˈlɜːnɪd/, usually written simply as *learned*, is still used as an adjective to mean "educated", or to refer to academic institutions, in both BrE and AmE). Finally, the past tense and past participle of *dwell* and *kneel* are more commonly *dwelt* and *knelt* on both sides of the Atlantic, although *dwelled* and *kneeled* are widely used in the US (but not in the UK). *Lit* as the past tense of 'light' is much more common than *lighted* in the UK; the regular form enjoys more use in the US, although it is somewhat less common than lit. By contrast, fit as the past tense of fit is much more used in AmE than BrE, which generally favours *fitted*. The past tense of spit "expectorate" is *spat* in BrE, *spit* or spat in AmE. The past participle *gotten* is rarely used in modern BrE (although it is used in some dialects), which generally uses got, except in old expressions such as 'ill-gotten gains'. According to the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, "The form *gotten* is not used in British English but is very common in North American English, though even there it is often regarded as non-standard." In AmE, *gotten* emphasizes the action of acquiring and *got* tends to indicate simple possession (for example, *Have you gotten it*? versus *Have you got it*?). Gotten is also typically used in AmE as the past participle for phrasal verbs using get, such as 'get off', 'get on', 'get into', 'get up', and 'get around': *If you hadn't*

gotten up so late, you might not have gotten into this mess. Interestingly, AmE, but not BrE, has forgot as a less common alternative to *forgotten* for the past participle of *forget*.

In BrE, the past participle *proved* is strongly preferred to *proven*; in AmE, *proven* is now about as common as proved. (Both dialects use proven as an adjective and in formulas such as 'not proven'). AmE further allows other irregular verbs, such as *dive* (dove) or *sneak* (snuck), and often mixes the preterite and past participle forms (spring–sprang, US also sprung)–sprung, sometimes forcing verbs such as *shrink* (shrank–shrunk) to have a further form, thus *shrunk–shrunken*. These uses are often considered nonstandard; some stylebooks in AmE treat some irregular verbs as colloquialisms, insisting on the regular forms for the past tense of *dive, plead* and *sneak*. *Dove* and *snuck* are usually considered nonstandard in Britain, although *dove* exists in some British dialects and *snuck* is occasionally found in British speech.

By extension of the irregular verb pattern, verbs with irregular preterits in some variants of colloquial AmE also have a separate past participle, for example, "to buy": past tense *bought spawns boughten*. Such formations are highly irregular from speaker to speaker, or even within idiolects. This phenomenon is found chiefly in the northern US and other areas where immigrants of German descent are predominant, and may have developed as a result of German influence (though in German, both are regular past participle forms, cf. *kaufen, kaufte, gekauft* (bought) and *lesen, las, gelesen* (read)). Even in areas where the feature predominates, however, it has not gained widespread acceptance as "standard" usage.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the various notional differences in grammar and lexicon existing in AmE and BrE.

3.2 Phonological Differences

Compared to British English, North American English is in many ways quite conservative in its phonology. Some distinctive accents can be found on the East Coast (for example, in Eastern New England and New York City), partly because these areas were in contact with England, and imitated prestigious varieties of British English at a time when those varieties were undergoing changes. Also, many speech communities on the East Coast have existed in their present locations longer than others. The interior of the United States, however, was settled by people from all regions of the existing U.S. and, as such, developed a far more generic linguistic pattern.

The red areas are those where non-rhotic pronunciations are found among some white people in the United States. Most North American speech is rhotic, as English was in most places in the 17th century. *To be rhotic means pronouncing the letter "r" when it occurs after a vowel or at the end of a syllable*. Rhoticity was further supported by Hiberno-English, Scottish English, and West Country English. In most varieties of North American English, the sound corresponding to the letter *r* is a retroflex or alveolar approximant rather than a trill or a tap. The loss of syllable-final *r* in North America is confined mostly to the accents of eastern New England, New York City and surrounding areas, South Philadelphia, and the coastal portions of the South. Dropping of syllable-final *r* sometimes happens in natively rhotic dialects if r is located in unaccented syllables or words and the next syllable or word begins in a consonant. In England, the lost r was often changed into [ə] (schwa), giving rise to a new class of falling diphthongs.

On the other hand, North American English has undergone some sound changes not found in Britain, especially not in its standard varieties. Many of these are instances of phonemic differentiation and include:

a) The merger of [ɑ] and [ɒ], making *father* and *bother* rhyme. This change is nearly universal in North American English, occurring almost everywhere, except for parts of eastern New England, hence the Boston accent.

b) The merger of [ɒ] and [ɔ]. This is the so-called cot-caught merger, where cot and caught are homophones. This change has occurred in eastern New England, in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas, and from the Great Plains westward. For speakers who do not merge caught and cot: The replacement of the *cot* vowel with the *caught* vowel before voiceless fricatives (as in *cloth, off*) (which is found in some old-fashioned varieties of RP), as well as before /ŋ/ (as in *strong, long*), usually in *gone, often in on*, and irregularly before /g/ (*log, hog, dog, fog*) (which is not found in British English at all).

c) The replacement of the lot vowel with the strut vowel in most utterances of the words *was, of, from, what,* and *in* many utterances of the words *everybody, nobody, somebody, anybody*; the word *because* has either /ʌ/ or /ɔ/; want has normally /ɔ/, sometimes /ʌ/ or /ɑ/.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the rhotic phonological differences and how they identify the speakers of each variety.

3.3 Morphological/ Lexical Differences

a. Morphological: Word derivation and compounds

Directional suffix -ward(s): British *forwards, towards, rightwards*, etc.; American *forward, toward, rightward*. In both dialects, distribution varies somewhat: *afterwards, towards,* and *backwards* are not unusual in America; while in Britain *forward* is common, and standard in phrasal verbs like *look forward to*. The forms with -s may be used as adverbs (or preposition *towards*), but rarely as adjectives: in Britain as in America, one says "an upward motion". *The Oxford English Dictionary* in 1897 suggested a semantic distinction for adverbs, with *-wards* having a more definite directional sense than *-ward*; subsequent authorities such as Fowler have disputed this view.

AmE freely adds the suffix -s to*day, night, evening, weekend, Monday*, etc. to form adverbs denoting repeated or customary action: *I used to stay out evenings*; *the library is closed Saturdays*. This usage has its roots in Old English, but many of these constructions are now regarded as American.

In BrE, the agentive -er suffix is commonly attached to football (also cricket; often netball; occasionally basketball). AmE usually uses football player. Where the sport's name is usable as a verb, the suffixation is standard in both dialects: for example, golfer, and bowler (in *Ten-pin bowling* and in *Lawn Bowls*), and *shooter*. AmE appears to sometimes use the BrE form in *baller* as slang for a basketball player. However, this is derived from slang use of *to ball* as a verb meaning *to play a basketball*.

English writers everywhere occasionally (and from time immemorial) make new compound words from common phrases; for example, *health care* is now being replaced by *healthcare* on both sides of the Atlantic. However, AmE has made certain words in this fashion that are still treated as phrases in BrE. Regarding compound nouns of the form <verb><noun>, AmE sometimes favours the bare infinitive where BrE favours the gerund. Examples include (AmE first): *jump rope/skipping rope*; *racecar/racing car*; *rowboat/rowing boat*; *sailboat/sailing boat*; *file cabinet/filing cabinet*; *dial tone/dialling tone*. More generally, AmE has a tendency to drop inflectional suffixes, thus favouring clipped forms: compare *cookbook vs. cookery book*; *Smith, age 40 vs. Smith, aged 40*; *skim milk vs. skimmed milk*; *dollhouse vs. doll's house*; *barbershop vs. barber's shop*.

Singular attributives in one country may be plural in the other, and vice versa. For example, the UK has a *drugs problem* while the United States

has a *drug problem* (although the singular usage is also commonly heard in the UK); Americans read the *sports section* of a newspaper, while the British are more likely to read the *sport section.* However, in BrE *maths* is singular, just as AmE *math* is: both are abbreviations of *mathematics*.

Morphologically, AmE has always shown a marked tendency to use substantives as verbs. Examples of verbed nouns are *interview, advocate, vacuum, lobby, expense, room, pressure, rear-end, transition, feature, profile, buffalo, weasel, express* (mail), *belly-ache, spearhead, skyrocket, showcase, merchandise, service* (as a car), *corner, torch, exit* (as in "exit the lobby"), factor (in mathematics), gun "shoot," author (which disappeared in English around 1630 and was revived in the U.S. three centuries later) and, out of American material, proposition, *graft* (bribery), *bad-mouth, vacation, major, backpack, backtrack, intern, ticket* (traffic violations), *hassle, blacktop, peer-review, dope, and OD.*

Compounds coined in the U.S. are for instance *foothill, flatlands, badlands, landslide* (in all senses), *overview* (the noun), *backdrop, teenager, brainstorm, bandwagon, hitchhike, smalltime, deadbeat, front man, lowbrow and highbrow, hell-bent, foolproof, nitpick, about-face* (later verbed), *upfront* (in all senses), *fixer-upper, no-show*; many of these are phrases used as adverbs or (often) 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 (*empty nester, loan shark, ambulance chaser, buzz saw, ghetto blaster, dust bunny*), others are euphemistic (differently *abled, human resources, physically challenged, affirmative action, correctional facility*).

Many compound nouns have the form verb plus preposition: *add-on, stopover, lineup, shakedown, tryout, spinoff, rundown "summary," shootout, holdup, hideout, comeback, cookout, kickback, makeover, takeover, rollback "decrease," rip-off, come-on, shoo-in, fix-up, tie-in, tie-up "stoppage," stand-in.* These essentially are nonced phrasal verbs; some prepositional and phrasal verbs are in fact of American origin (*spell out, figure out, hold up, brace up, size up, rope in, back up/off/down/out, step down, miss out on, kick around, cash in, rain out, check in and checkout* (in all senses), fill in "inform," kick in "contribute," *square off, sock in, sock away, factor in/out, come down with, give up on, lay off* (from employment), *run into and across "meet," stop by, pass up, put up* (money), *set up "frame," trade in, pick up on, pick up after, lose out.*

Noun endings such as -ee (*retiree*), -ery (*bakery*), -ster (*gangster*), and -cian (*beautician*) are also particularly productive in AmE. Some verbs ending in -ize are of U.S. origin; for example, *fetishize, prioritize, burglarize, accessorize, itemize, editorialize, customize, notarize, weatherize, winterize, Mirandize*; and so are some back-formations (*locate, fine-tune, evolute, curate, donate, emote, upholster, and enthuse*).Americanisms formed by alteration of existing words include *notably pesky, phony, rambunctious, pry* (as in "pry open," from prize), *putter* (verb), *buddy, sundae, skeeter, sashay, and kitty-corner*. Adjectives that arose in the U.S. are for example *lengthy, bossy, cute and cutesy, grounded* (of a child), *puink* (in all senses), *sticky* (of the weather), *through* (as in "through train," or meaning "finished"), and many colloquial forms such as *peppy* or *wacky*. American blends include *motel, guesstimate, infomercial, and televangelist*.

b. Lexical

Verbal auxiliaries

Shall (as opposed to *will*) is more commonly used by the British than by Americans. *Shan't* is seldom used in AmE (almost invariably replaced by ‘won't’ or ‘am not going to’), and very much less so amongst Britons. American grammar also tends to ignore some traditional distinctions between *should* and *would* however, expressions like *I should be happy* are rather formal even in BrE.

Transitivity

The following verbs show differences in transitivity between BrE and AmE:

Agree: Transitive or intransitive in BrE, usually intransitive in AmE (agree a contract/agree to or on a contract). However, in formal AmE legal writing one often sees constructions like *as may be agreed between the parties* (rather than *as may be agreed upon between the parties*).

Appeal (as a decision): Usually intransitive in BrE (used with against) and transitive in AmE (appeal against the decision to the Court/appeal the decision to the Court).

Catch up ("to reach and overtake"): Transitive or intransitive in BrE, strictly intransitive in AmE (to catch sb up/to catch up with sb). A transitive form does exist in AmE, but has a different meaning: *to catch somebody up* means that the subject will help the object catch up, rather the opposite of the BrE transitive meaning.

Cater ("to provide food and service"): Intransitive in BrE, transitive in AmE (to cater for a banquet/to cater a banquet).

Claim: Sometimes intransitive in BrE (used with for), strictly transitive in AmE.

Meet: AmE uses intransitively *meet* followed by *with* to mean "to have a meeting with", as for business purposes (*Yesterday we met with the CEO*), and reserves transitive *meet* for the meanings "to be introduced to" (*I want you to meet the CEO; she is such a fine lady*), "to come together with (someone, somewhere)" (*Meet the CEO at the train station*), and "to have a casual encounter with". BrE uses transitive meet also to mean "to have a meeting with"; the construction *meet with*, which actually dates back to Middle English, appears to be coming back into use in Britain, despite some commentators who preferred to avoid confusion with *meet with* meaning "receive, undergo" (the proposal was met with disapproval). The construction *meets up with* (as in *to meet up with someone*), which originated in the US, has long been standard in both dialects.

Provide: Strictly mono-transitive in BrE, monotransitive or ditransitive in AmE (provide sb with sth/provide sbsth).

Protest: In a sense it means "oppose", intransitive in BrE, transitive in AmE (*The workers protested the decision/The workers protested against the decision*). The intransitive protest against in AmE means, *to hold or participate in a demonstration against*. The older sense "proclaim" is always transitive (protest one's innocence).

Write: In BrE, the indirect object of this verb usually requires the preposition to, for example, *I'll write to my MP* or *I'll write to her* (although it is not required in some situations, for example when an indirect object pronoun comes before a direct object noun, for example, *I'll write her a letter*). In AmE, write can be used mono-transitively (*I'll write my congressman; I'll write him*).

Prepositions and Adverbs

In the United States, the word, *through* can mean "up to and including" as in *Monday through Friday*. In the UK *Monday to Friday*, or *Monday to Friday inclusive* is used instead; *Monday through to Friday* is also sometimes used. (In some parts of Northern England the term *while* can be used in the same way, as in *Monday while Friday*, whereas in Northern Ireland *Monday till Friday* would be more natural.)

British athletes *play in* a team; American athletes *play on* a team. (Both may play for a particular team.)

In AmE, the use of the function word *out* as a preposition in *out the door* and *out the window* is standard. In BrE, *out of* is preferred in writing, but *out* is more common in speech. Several other uses of *out of* are peculiarly British (*out of all recognition, out of the team;* cf. above); all of this notwithstanding, *out of* is overall more frequent in AmE than in BrE. The word *heat* meaning "mating season" is used with *on* in the UK and within the US.

The intransitive verb *affiliate* can take either *with* or *to* in BrE, but only *with* in AmE.

The verb *enrol* usually takes *on* in BrE and *in* in AmE (as in "to enrol on/in a course") and the on/in difference is used when enrolled is dropped (as in "I am (enrolled) on the course that studies....").

In AmE, one always speaks of the street *on* which an address is located, whereas in BrE in can also be used *in* some contexts. *In* suggests an address on a city street, so a service station (or a tourist attraction or indeed a village) would always be on a major road, but a department store might be in Oxford Street. Moreover, if a particular place *on* the street is specified, then the preposition used is whichever is idiomatic to the place, thus "at the end of Churchill Road".

BrE favours the preposition *at* with weekend ("at (the) weekend(s)"); the constructions on, over, and during (the) weekend(s) are found in both varieties but are all more common in AmE than BrE.

Adding *at* to the end of a question requesting a location is common in AmE (especially *in the Midwest*), for example, "where are you at?", but would be considered superfluous in BrE.

After *talk* Americans can use the preposition *with* but British always use *to* (that is, *I'll talk with Dave / I'll talk to Dave*. The American form is sometimes seen as more politically correct in British organisations, inducing the ideal of discussing (with), as opposed to lecturing (to). This is, of course, unless *talk* is being used as a noun, for example: "I'll have a talk with him" in which case this is acceptable in both BrE and AmE.

In both dialects, *from* is the preposition prescribed for use after the word *different*: *American English is different from British English in several respects*. However, *different than* is also commonly heard in the US, and is often considered standard when followed by a clause (*American*

English is different than it used to be), whereas *different to* is the alternative common in BrE.

It is common in BrE to say *opposite to* as an alternative to *opposite of*, the only form normally found in AmE. The use of *opposite* as a preposition (opposite the post office) has long been established in both dialects, but appears to be more common in British usage.

The noun *opportunity* can be followed by a verb in two different ways: *opportunity plus to-infinitive* ("the opportunity to do something") or *opportunity plus of plus gerund* ("the opportunity of doing something"). The first construction is the most common in both dialects, but the second has almost disappeared in AmE and is often regarded as a Briticism.

Both Britons and Americans may say (for example) that a river is *named after* a state, but "named for a state" would rightly be regarded as an Americanism.

BrE sometimes uses *to* with *near* (*we live near to the university*), while AmE avoids the preposition in most usages dealing with literal, physical proximity (*we live near the university*), although the *to* reappears in AmE when *near* takes the comparative or superlative form, as in *she lives nearer/nearest to the deranged axe murderer's house*.

In BrE, one *calls* (or *rings*) someone *on* his or her telephone number; in AmE, one calls someone *at* his or her telephone number.

When referring to the constituency of a US Senator the preposition "from" is usually used: "Senator from New York," whereas a British MPs are "for" their constituency: "MP for East Cleveland."

In AmE, the phrases *aside from* and *apart from* are used about equally; in BrE, *apart from* is far more common.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Identify some morphological and lexical differences in AmE and BrE.

3.4 Syntactic Differences

a. Use of tenses

BrE uses the present perfect tense to talk about an event in the recent past and with the words *already, just,* and *yet*. In American usage, these meanings can be expressed with the present perfect (to express a fact) or

the simple past (to imply an expectation). This American style has become widespread only in the past 20 to 30 years; the British style is still in common use as well:

"I've just arrived home." / "I just arrived home."
"I've already eaten." / "I already ate."

(Recently the American use of *just* with simple past has made inroads into BrE, most visibly in advertising slogans and headlines such as "Cable broadband just got faster".)

Similarly, AmE occasionally replaces the pluperfect with the preterit. Also, US spoken usage sometimes substitutes the conditional for the pluperfect (*If I would have cooked the pie we could have had it for lunch*), but this tends to be avoided in writing.

In BrE, *have got* or *have* can be used for possession and *have got to* and have to can be used for the modal of necessity. The forms that include *got* are usually used in informal contexts and the forms without *got* in contexts that are more formal. In American speech the form without *got* is used more than in the UK. AmE also informally uses *got* as a verb for these meanings – for example, *I got two cars*, *I got to go*; but these are nonstandard and will be considered sloppy usage by most American speakers.

The subjunctive mood (morphologically identical with the bare infinitive) is regularly used in AmE in mandative clauses (as in *They suggested that he apply for the job*). In BrE, this usage declined in the 20th century, in favor of constructions such as *They suggested that he should apply for the job* (or even, more ambiguously, *They suggested that he applied for the job*). Apparently, however, the mandative subjunctive has recently started to come back into use in BrE.

b. Presence or Absence of Syntactic Elements

Where a statement of intention involves two separate activities, it is acceptable for speakers of AmE to use *to go plus bare infinitive*. Speakers of BrE would instead use *to go and plus bare infinitive*. Thus, where a speaker of AmE might say *I'll go take a bath*, BrE speakers would say *I'll go and have a bath*. (Both can also use the form to go to instead to suggest that the action may fail, as in *He went to take/have a bath, but the bath was full of children*.) Similarly, *to come plus bare infinitive* is acceptable to speakers of AmE, where speakers of BrE would instead *use to come and plus bare infinitive*. Thus, where a speaker of AmE might say *come see what I bought*, BrE speakers would say *come and see what I've bought* (notice the present perfect tense: a common British preference).

c. Use of Prepositions before Days Denoted by a Single Word

Where British people would say *She resigned on Thursday*, Americans often say *She resigned Thursday*, but both forms are common in American usage. Occasionally, the preposition is also absent when referring to months: *I'll be here December* (although this usage is generally limited to colloquial speech).

In the UK, *from* is used with single dates and times more often than in the United States. Where British speakers and writers may say *the new museum will be open from Tuesday*, Americans most likely say *the new museum will be open starting Tuesday*. A variation or alternative of this is the mostly American *the play opens Tuesday* and the mostly British *the play opens on Tuesday*.

A few 'institutional' nouns take no definite article when a certain role is implied: for example, *at sea* (as a sailor), *in prison* (as a convict), and *at/in college* (for students). Among this group, BrE has *in hospital* (as a patient) and *at university* (as a student), where AmE requires *in the hospital and at the university*. (When the implied roles of patient or student do not apply, the definite article is used in both dialects.) Likewise, BrE distinguishes *in future* ("from now on") from *in the future* ("at some future time"); AmE uses *in the future* for both senses.

In BrE, numbered highways usually take the definite article (for example "the M25", "the A14") while in America they usually do not ("I-495", "Route 66"). Southern California is an exception, where "the 5" or "the 405" are the standard. A similar pattern is followed for named roads, but in America, there are local variations and older American highways tend to follow the British pattern ("the Boston Post Road").

AmE distinguishes *in back of* [behind] from *in the back of*; the former is unknown in the UK and liable to misinterpretation as the latter. Both, however, distinguish *in front of* from *in the front of*.

American legislators and lawyers always use the preposition *of* between the name of a legislative act and the year it was passed, while their British equivalents do not. Compare *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* to *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

Dates usually include a definite article in UK spoken English, such as "the 11th of July", or "July the 11th", while American speakers say "July 11th".

AmE omits, and BrE requires, the definite article in a few standard expressions such as *tell (the) time*.

d. Miscellaneous Grammatical Differences

In AmE, some prescriptionists feel that *which* should not be used as an antecedent in restrictive relative clauses. According to *The Elements of Style*, "that is the defining, or restrictive pronoun, which the nondefining, or nonrestrictive." This distinction was endorsed by *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, but the use of *which* as a restrictive pronoun is common in great literature produced on both sides of the Atlantic.

In names of American rivers, the word *river* usually comes after the name (for example, *Colorado River*), whereas for British rivers it comes before (as in *River Thames*). One exception present in BrE is the *FleetRiver*, which is rarely called *the River Fleet* by Londoners outside of official documentation. Exceptions in the US are the *River Rouge* and the *River Raisin*, both in Michigan and named by the French. This convention is mixed, however, in some Commonwealth nations, where both arrangements are often seen.

In BrE the word *sat* is often colloquially used to cover *sat*, *sitting* and *seated*: *I've been sat here waiting for half an hour*. *The bride's family will be sat on the right-hand side of the church*. This construction is not often heard outside the UK. In the 1960s, its use would mark a speaker as coming from the north of England but by the turn of the 21st century this form had spread to the south. Its use often conveys lighthearted informality, as many speakers intentionally use an ungrammatical construction they would probably not use in formal written English. This colloquial usage is widely understood by British speakers. Similarly *stood* can be used instead of *standing*. To an American, these usages are passive, and may imply that the subject had been involuntarily forced to *sit* or *stand*, or directed to hold that location.

In most areas of the United States, the word *with* is also used as an adverb: *I'll come with* instead of *I'll come along*. However, in some British Dialects, *come with* is used as an abbreviation of *come with me*, as in *I'm going to the office – come with*. This particular variant is also used by speakers in Minnesota and parts of the adjoining states: *Want to come with?* This is another expression possibly arising from German (kommst du mit?) in parts of the United States with high concentrations of German American populations. It is similar to South African English, where the expression comes from Dutch, and is used by Afrikaans speakers when speaking English.

The word *also* is used at the end of a sentence in AmE, but not so commonly in BrE, although it is encountered in Northern Ireland.

Additionally, sentence ending as well is more formal in AmE than in BrE.

In AmE, the last letter of the alphabet Z is pronounced /zee/; in BrE, it is pronounced /zed/.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Identify the different syntactic peculiarities in AmE and BrE and discuss the applications with ample example.

3.5 Differences in Writing

a. Punctuation

i. Full stops/Periods in abbreviations: Americans tend to write *Mr., Mrs., St., Dr*. etc., while British will most often write *Mr, Mrs, St, Dr*, etc., following the rule that a full stop is used only when the last letter of the abbreviation is not the last letter of the complete word; this kind of abbreviation is known as a contraction in the UK. Many British writers would tend to write other abbreviations without a full stop, such as *Prof*, *etc*, *eg*, and *so on* (so recommended by some Oxford dictionaries). However, the "American" usage of periods after most abbreviations is also widely used in the UK. In either case, it is incorrect to put a stop / period after unit symbols such as *kg* or *Hz*; however, in non-scientific contexts, the unit for "inch" is often written *in*., as it would be ambiguous without the period. It is sometimes believed that BrE does not hyphenate multiple-word adjectives (e.g. "a first class ticket"). The most common form is as in AmE ("a first-class ticket"), but some British writers omit the hyphen when no ambiguity would arise.

ii. Quoting: Americans start with double quotation marks (") and use single quotation marks (') for quotations within quotations. In general, this is also true of BrE, but can be the opposite when used in book publishing, for example. In journals and newspapers, quotation mark double/single use depends on the individual publication's house style. Americans are taught to put commas and periods inside quotation marks (except for question marks and exclamation points that apply to a sentence as a whole); whereas British people will put the punctuation inside if it belongs to the quotation and outside otherwise. With direct speech, both styles retain punctuation inside the quotation marks, with a full stop changing into a comma if followed by explanatory text. Examples:

> Carefree means "free from care or anxiety." (American style)
> Carefree means "free from care or anxiety". (British style)
> "Hello, world," I said. (Both styles)

The American style was established for typographical reasons, a historical holdover from the days of the handset printing press. It also eliminates the need to decide whether a period or comma belongs to the quotation. However, many people find the usage counterintuitive. In fact, the British style is often the *de facto* standard among Americans for whom formal or professional writing is not a part of their daily life; many are in fact unaware that the normative American usage is to place commas and periods within the quotation marks.

"I am going to the store. (I hope it is still open.)"
But:
"I am going to the store (if it is still open)."

iii. Letter-writing: American students in some areas have been taught to write a colon after the greeting in business letters ("Dear Sir:") while British people usually write a comma ("Dear Sir,") or make use of the so-called open punctuation ("Dear Sir"). However, this practice is not consistent throughout the United States, and it would be regarded as a highly formal usage by most Americans.

b. Use of Capitalization

Sometimes, the words in titles of publications, newspaper headlines, as well as chapter and section headings are capitalised in the same manner as in normal sentences (sentence case). That is, only the first letter of the first word is capitalised, along with proper nouns, etc. However, publishers sometimes require additional words in titles and headlines to have the initial capital, for added emphasis, as it is often perceived as appearing more professional. In AmE, this is common in titles, but less so in newspaper headlines. The exact rules differ between publishers and are often ambiguous; *a typical approach is to capitalise all words other than short articles, prepositions, and conjunctions*. This should probably be regarded as a common stylistic difference, rather than a linguistic difference, as neither form would be considered incorrect or unusual in either the UK or the US. Many British tabloid newspapers (such as The Sun, The Daily Sport, News of the World) *use fully capitalised headlines for impact*, as opposed to readability (for example, BERLINWALLFALLS or BIRD FLU PANIC). On the other hand, the broadsheets (such as *The Guardian, The Times,* and *The Independent*) *usually follow the sentence style of having only the first letter of the first word capitalised*. However, it must be emphasized here that it is your audience or the in-house publishing rules that determine the documentation style in in any journal.

c. Dates

Dates are usually written differently in the short (numerical) form. Christmas Day 2000, for example, is 25/12/00 or 25.12.00 (dashes are occasionally used) in the UK and 12/25/00 in the US, although the formats 25/12/2000, 25.12.2000, and 12/25/2000 now have more currency than they had before the Year 2000 problem. Occasionally other formats are encountered, such as the ISO 8601 2000-12-25, popular among programmers, scientists, and others seeking to avoid ambiguity. The difference in short-form date order can lead to misunderstanding. For example, 06/04/05 could mean either June 4, 2005 (if read as US format), 6 April 2005 (if seen as in UK format), or even 5 April 2006 if taken to be an older ISO 8601-style format where 2-digit years were allowed.

A consequence of the different short-form of dates is that in the UK many people would be reluctant to refer to "9/11", although its meaning would be instantly understood. On the BBC, "September the 11th" is generally used in preference to 9/11. However, 9/11 is commonplace in the British press to refer specifically to the events of September 11, 2001. For the sake of clarity, 11/9 is occasionally, yet deliberately, used to emphasize the distinction between September 11, 2001, and September 11 of any other year.

Phrases such as the following are common in Britain and Ireland but are generally unknown in the U.S: "A week today", "a week tomorrow", "a week on Tuesday", "a week Tuesday", "Tuesday week" (this is found in central Texas), "Friday fortnight", "a fortnight on Friday" and "a fortnight Friday" (these latter referring to two weeks after "next Friday"). In the US, the standard construction is "a week from today", "a week from tomorrow" etc. BrE speakers may also say "Thursday last" or "Thursday gone" instead of "last Thursday".

Times

Americans always write digital times with a colon, thus 6:00, whereas Britons often use a point, 6.00, although it is becoming increasingly popular to use a colon. Also, the 24-hour clock (18:00 or 1800), which, in the UK, would be considered normal in many applications (for example, air/rail/bus timetables), is largely unused in the US outside of military or medical applications. Often, in the UK, 18:00 will be written as 1800h, or 06:00 as 0600h - representing the military speak "oh-six-hundred-hours", even if people would usually read it aloud as "six o'clock". This has become popular in text messaging since it is easier to type an "h" than a colon.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Assess the differences in writing in AmE and BrE with regards to the points of convergence.

3.6 Other Differences

a. Numbers

i. When saying or writing out numbers, the British will typically insert an 'and' before the tens and units, as in *one hundred and sixty-two* and *two thousand and three*. In America, it is considered correct to drop the 'and', as in *two thousand three*; however, this is rarely heard in everyday speech, *two thousand and three* being much more common. Some American schools teach students to pronounce decimally written fractions (e.g. .5) as though they were longhand fractions (five tenths), such as *five hundred thirteen and seven tenths* for 513.7. This formality is often dropped in common speech. It is steadily disappearing in instruction in mathematics that is more advanced and science work as well as in international American schools. In the UK, 513.7 would generally be read five hundred and thirteen point seven, although if it were written 513 7⁄10, it would be pronounced five hundred and thirteen and seven tenths.

ii. In counting, it is common in both varieties of English to count in hundreds up to 1,900 – so 1,200 may be twelve hundred. However, Americans use this pattern for much higher numbers than is the norm in British English, referring to *twenty-four hundred* where British English would most often use *two thousand four hundred*. Even below 2,000, Americans are more likely than the British are to read numbers like 1,234 as *twelve hundred thirty-four*, instead of *one thousand two hundred and thirty-four*. In BrE, it is also common to use phrases such as *three and a half thousand* for 3,500, whereas in AmE this construction is almost never used for numbers under a million.

iii. In the case of years, however, *twelve thirty-four* would be the norm on both sides of the Atlantic for the year 1234. The year 2000 and years beyond it are read as *two thousand*, *two thousand (and) one* and the like by both British and American speakers. For years after 2009, they are frequently said *twenty ten*, *twenty twelve* etc. by the BBC.

iv. For the house number (or bus number, etc.) 272, British people tend to say *two seven two* while Americans tend to say *two seventy-two*.

v. There is also a historical difference between billions, trillions, and so forth. Americans use billion to mean *one thousand million* (1,000,000,000), whereas in the UK, until the latter part of the 20th century, it was used to mean *one million million* (1,000,000,000,000). It is believed that Margaret Thatcher started the change on advice from the Bank of England. The British prime minister, Harold Wilson, in 1974, told the House of Commons that UK government statistics would now use the short scale; followed by the Chancellor, Denis Healey, in 1975, that the treasury would now adopt the US billion version although, historically such numbers were not often required outside of mathematical and scientific contexts. *One thousand million* was sometimes described as a milliard, the definition adopted by most other European languages. However, the "American" version has since been adopted for all published writing, and the word *milliard* is obsolete in English, as are billiard (but not billiards, the game), *trilliard* and so on. However, the term *yard*, derived from *milliard*, is still used in the financial markets on both sides of the Atlantic to mean "one thousand million". All major British publications and broadcasters, including the BBC, which long used *thousand million* to avoid ambiguity, now use *billion* to mean *thousand million*.

vi. Many people have no direct experience with manipulating numbers this large, and many non-American readers may interpret billion as 1012 (even if they are young enough to have been taught otherwise at school); also, usage of the "long" billion is standard in some non-English speaking countries. For these reasons, defining the word may be advisable when writing for the public. See long and short scales for a more detailed discussion of the evolution of these terms in English and other languages.

vii. When referring to the numeral 0, British people would normally use *nought*, *oh*, *zero* or *nil* in instances such as sports scores and voting results. Americans use the term zero most frequently; oh is also often used (though never when the quantity in question is nothing), and occasionally slang terms such as *zilch* or *zip*. Phrases such as the team won *two–zip or the team leads the series, two–nothing* are heard when reporting sports scores. The digit 0, for example, when reading a phone or account number aloud, is nearly always pronounced *oh* in both language varieties for the sake of convenience.

viii. When reading numbers in a sequence, such as a telephone or serial number, British people will usually use the terms double or triple/treble followed by the repeated number. Hence, 007 is *double oh seven*. Exceptions are the emergency telephone number 999, which is always *nine ninenine*, and the apocalyptic "Number of the Beast", which is always *six sixsix*. The directory enquiries prefix 118 is also *one one eight* in Britain. In the US, 911 (the US emergency telephone number) is usually read *nine one one*, while 9/11 (in reference to the September 11, 2001 attacks) is usually read *nine eleven*.

b. Monetary Amounts

i. Monetary amounts in the range of one to two major currency units are often spoken differently. In AmE one may say *a dollar fifty or a pound eighty*, whereas in BrE these amounts would be expressed *one dollar fifty and one pound eighty*. For amounts over a dollar, an American will generally either drop denominations or give both dollars and cents, as in *two-twenty or two dollars and twenty cents for $2.20*. An American would not say *two dollars twenty*. On the other hand, in BrE, *two pounds twenty* would be the most common form. It is more common to hear a British-English speaker say one *thousand two hundred dollars than a thousand and two hundred dollars*, although the latter construct is common in AmE. The term *twelve hundred dollars*, popular in AmE, is frequently used in BrE but only for exact multiples of 100 up to 1900. Speakers of BrE very rarely hear amounts over 1900 expressed in hundreds, for example *twenty-three hundred*.

ii. The BrE slang term *quid* is roughly equivalent to the AmE *buck* and both are often used in the two respective dialects for round amounts, as in *fifty quid for £50 and twenty bucks for $20. A hundred and fifty grand* in either dialect could refer to *£150,000 or $150,000* depending on context.

iii. A user of AmE may hand-write the mixed monetary amount $3.24 as $324 or $324 (often seen for extra clarity on a check); BrE users will always write this as £3.24, £3·24 or, for extra clarity on a cheque, as £3—24. In all cases there may or may not be a space after the currency symbol, or the currency symbols may be omitted depending on context.

iv. The term pound sign in BrE always refers to the currency symbol £, whereas in AmE pound sign means the number sign, which the

British call the hash symbol, #. (The British telephone company BT, in the 1960s–1990s, called this gate on telephone keypads.)

In BrE, the plural of the word *pound* is often considered *pound* as opposed to *pounds*. For example, three pound forty and twenty pound a week are both legitimate British English. This does not apply to other currencies, however, so that the same speaker would most likely say three dollars forty, twenty dollars a week in similar contexts.

In BrE, the use of p instead of pence is common in spoken usage. Each of the following has equal legitimacy: three pounds, twelve p, three pounds and twelve p, three pounds, twelve pence, three pounds and twelve pence, as well as just eight p or eight pence.

AmE uses words like *nickel, dime, and quarter for small coins*. In BrE, the usual usage is *10-pence piece or 10p piece for any coin below £1*, with piece sometimes omitted, but pound coin and two-pound coin. BrE did have specific words for a number of coins before decimalisation.

c. Time-telling

Fifteen minutes after the hour is called *quarter past* in British usage and a *quarter after or, less commonly, a quarter past* in American usage. Fifteen minutes before the hour is usually called *quarter to* in British usage and *a quarter of, a quarter to or a quarter till* in American usage; the form *a quarter to* is associated with parts of the Northern United States, while a quarter till is found chiefly in the Appalachian region. Thirty minutes after the hour is commonly called *half past in both BrE and AmE*. In informal British speech, the preposition is sometimes omitted, so that 5:30 may be referred to as *half five* (by contrast, in the German halbfünf is half-an-hour before five, i.e. 4:30). *Half after* used to be more common in the US. The AmE formations top of the hour and bottom of the hour are not commonly used in BrE. Forms like *eleven forty are common in both dialects*.

d. Levels of buildings

There are also variations in floor numbering between the US and UK. In most countries, including the UK, the "first floor" is one above the entrance level while the entrance level is the "ground floor". On lift (elevator) buttons in the UK the Ground Floor is often denoted by the letter G, or the number 0. Normal American usage labels the entrance level as the "first floor" or the "ground floor", the floor immediately above that is the "second floor".

e. Figures of speech

Both BrE and AmE use the expression "I couldn't care less" to mean *the speaker does not care at all*. In AmE, the phrase "I could care less" (without the n't) is sometimes used to mean the same thing, despite technically meaning the opposite. Intonation no longer reflects the originally sarcastic nature of this variant, which is not idiomatic in BrE and might be interpreted as anything from nonsense (or sloppiness) to an indication that the speaker does care.

In both areas, saying, "I don't mind" often means, "I'm not annoyed" (for example, by someone's smoking), while "I don't care" often means, "The matter is trivial or boring". However, in answering a question like "Tea or coffee?", if either alternative is equally acceptable, an American may answer, "I don't care", while a British person may answer, "I don't mind". Either sounds odd to the other.

In BrE, the phrase *I can't be arsed (to do something)* is a vulgar equivalent to the British or American *I can't be bothered (to do something)*. This can be extremely confusing to Americans, as the Southern British pronunciation of the former sounds similar to *I can't be asked...*, which sounds either defiantly rude or nonsensical. Older BrE often uses the exclamation "No fear!" where current AmE has "No way!" This usage may confuse users of AmE, who are likely to interpret and even use "No fear!" as enthusiastic willingness to move forward.

f. Idioms

A number of English idioms that have essentially the same meaning show lexical differences between the British and the American version; for instance:

	British English	**American English**
1.	not touch something with a bargepole	not touch something with a ten-foot pole
2.	sweep under the carpet	sweep under the rug
3.	touch wood	knock on wood
4.	see the wood for the trees	see the forest for the trees
5.	throw a spanner (in the works)	throw a (monkey) wrench (in the works)
6.	two pennies' worth, two pence worth	two cents' worth
7.	skeleton in the cupboard	skeleton in the closet
8.	a home from home	a home away from home
9.	blow one's trumpet	blow (or toot) one's horn

10. a drop in the ocean	a drop in the bucket
11. storm in a teacup	tempest in a teapot
12. flogging a dead horse	beating a dead horse
13. haven't (got) a clue	don't have a clue or have no clue
14. a new lease of life	a new lease on life

In some cases, the "American" variant is also used in BrE, or *vice versa*.

g. Education

In the UK, a student is said to *study*, or, at Oxford and Cambridge, to *read* a subject (read is now more commonly being used in reference to other universities). In the US, a student *studies* or *majors* in a subject (although concentration or emphasis is also used in some US colleges or universities to refer to the major subject of study). To major in something refers to the student's principal course of study, while to study may refer to any class being taken. Students may also major in a subject in the UK as a part of degrees with two subjects, one major and the other minor; this usage is rarely required since examples of such a situation are uncommon in the UK (the majority of degree courses either do not incorporate study outside of a single subject area, or include two subjects on an equal basis).

At the tertiary or university level in BrE, a *module* is taught by a lecturer (whose job title may nonetheless be professor), while in AmE, a *class* is generally taught by a professor (at some institutions, professor is reserved for tenure-track faculty with other members of the faculty referred to as lecturers or instructors, more closely corresponding to the BrE usage). At the primary and secondary levels, the term *teacher* is used instead in both BrE and AmE. The term *lecturer*, in an educational context, would be perceived in AmE as denoting *anyone, professor or special guest, giving an actual lecture before a class*.

BrE:
"She studied history at Bristol."
"She read history at Oxford."

AmE:
"She majored in history at Yale."
"He majored in history at Princeton."

The word *course* in American use typically refers to the study of a restricted topic (for example, *a course in Early Medieval England*, *a course in Integral Calculus*) over a limited period of time (such as a semester or term) and is equivalent to a module at a British university. In the UK, *a course of study* is likely to refer to a whole programme of

study, which may extend over several years, and made up of any number of modules.

In the UK, a student is said *to sit or take an exam*, while in the US, *a student takes an exam*. The expression *he sits for an exam* also arises in BrE, but only rarely in AmE; American lawyers-to-be *sit* for their bar exams, and American master's and doctoral students may *sit* for their comprehensive exams, but in nearly all other instances, Americans *take* their exams. When preparing for an exam, students *revise* (BrE)/*review* (AmE) what they have studied; the BrE idiom *to revise for* has the equivalent *to review for* in AmE.

Examinations are supervised by *invigilators* in the UK and *proctors* (or (exam) supervisors) in the US. In the UK, *a teacher sets an exam*, while in the US, *a teacher writes or gives an exam*.

BrE:
"I sat my Spanish exam yesterday."
"I plan to set a difficult exam for my students, but I don't have it ready yet."

AmE:
"I took my exams at Yale."
"I spent the entire day yesterday writing the exam. I'm almost ready to give it to my students."

Another source of confusion is the different usage of the word *college*. In the US, this refers to *a post-high school institution that grants bachelor's degrees*, while in the UK it refers primarily to *an institution between secondary school and university* (normally referred to *as a Sixth Form College after the old name in secondary education for Years 12 and 13, the 6th form*) where intermediary courses such as A Levels or NVQs can be taken and GCSE courses can be retaken. *College may sometimes be used in the UK or in Commonwealth countries as part of the name of a secondary or high school* (for example, Dubai College). It should be noted, however, that in the case of Oxford, Cambridge, London and Durham universities, all members are also members of a college, for example, one is a member of St. Peter's College, Oxford and hence the University.

In both the US and UK, *college* can refer to some division within a university such as the "college of business and economics". Institutions in the US that offer two to four years of post-high school education often have the word *college* as part of their name, while those offering more advanced degrees are called a *university*. (There are exceptions, of course: Boston College, Dartmouth College and The College of William

and Mary are examples of colleges that offer advanced degrees.) American students who pursue a bachelor's degree (four years of higher education) or an associate degree (two years of higher education) are *college students regardless of whether they attend a college or a university* and refer to their educational institutions informally as *colleges*. *A student who pursues a master's degree or a doctorate degree in the arts and sciences is in AmE a graduate student*; in BrE *a post-graduate student although graduate student also sometimes used*. Students of advanced professional programmes are known by their field (business student, law student, medical student, the last of which is frequently shortened to med student). Some universities also have a residential college system, the details of which may vary from school to school but generally involve common living and dining spaces as well as college-organized activities.

"Professor" has different meanings in BrE and AmE. In BrE, it is the highest academic rank, followed by Reader, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer. In AmE "Professor" refers to academic staff of all ranks, with (Full) Professor (largely equivalent to the UK meaning) followed by Associate Professor and Assistant Professor.

There is additionally a difference between American and British usage in the word *school*. In British usage "school" by itself refers only to primary (elementary) and secondary (high) schools, and to sixth forms attached to secondary schools — if one "goes to school", this type of institution is implied. By contrast, an American student at a university may talk of "going to school" or "being in school". US law students and med students almost universally speak in terms of going to "law school" and "med school", respectively. However, the word is used in BrE in the context of higher education; to describe a division groups together several related subjects in a university, for example a "School of European Languages" containing departments for each language, and also in the term "art school".

Among high school and college students in the United States, the words *freshman* (or the gender-neutral term *frosh* or first year), *sophomore*, *junior* and *senior* refer to the first, second, third, and fourth years, respectively. It is important that the context of either high school or college first be established, or else it must be stated directly (that is, *She is a high school freshman. He is a college junior*.). Many institutions in both countries also use the term *first-year* as a gender-neutral replacement for freshman, although in the US this is recent usage, formerly referring only to those in the first year as a graduate student. One exception is the University of Virginia; since its founding in 1819, the terms "first-year", "second-year", "third-year", and "fourth-year" have been used to describe undergraduate university students. At the

United States military academies, at least those operated directly by the federal government, a different terminology is used, namely "fourth class", "third class", "second class", and "first class" (note that the order of numbering is the reverse of the number of years in attendance). In the UK, first year university students are often called *freshers*, especially early in the academic year; however, there are no specific names for those in other years, or for school pupils. Graduate and professional students in the United States are known by their year of study (a "second-year medical student" or a "fifth-year doctoral candidate." Law students are often referred to as "1L", "2L", or "3L" rather than "nth-year law students"; similarly medical students are frequently referred to as "M1", "M2", "M3", or "M4").

While anyone in the US who finishes studying at any educational institution by passing relevant examinations is said to graduate and to be a graduate; in the UK only degree and above level students can graduate. Student itself has a wider meaning in AmE, meaning any person of any age studying at any educational institution, whereas in BrE it tends to be used for people studying at a post-secondary educational institution.

In the UK, the US equivalent of a high school is often referred to as a secondary school regardless of whether it is state funded or private. Secondary education in the United States also includes middle school or junior high school, a two or three year transitional school between elementary school and high school. A public school has opposite meanings in the two countries. In the US this is *a government-owned institution supported by taxpayers*. In England and Wales, the term strictly refers to *a select group of prestigious private independent schools funded by students' fees*, although it is often more loosely used to refer to any independent school. Independent schools are also known as private schools, and the latter is the correct term in Scotland and Northern Ireland for all such fee-funded schools.

h. Transport/Transportation

Americans refer to *transportation*, while British people refer to *transport*. As transportation in Britain was a penalty for a crime, that is, deportation, the British use the word communication to include goods and persons, whereas in America the word primarily refers to messages sent by post or electronics. The British devised the term telecoms for this last use; it is not quite standard in America.

Differences in terminology are especially obvious in the context of roads. The British term dual carriageway, in American parlance, would be a divided highway. Central reservation on a motorway in the UK

would be *a median on a freeway, expressway, highway, or parkway* in the US. The one-way lanes that make it possible to enter and leave such roads at an intermediate point without disrupting the *flow of traffic* are generally known as *slip roads* in the UK, but US civil engineers call them *ramps*, and further distinguish between *on-ramps* (for entering) and *off-ramps* (for leaving). When American engineers speak of *slip roads*, they are referring to a street that runs alongside the main road (separated by a berm) to allow off-the-highway access to the premises that are there, sometimes also known as a *frontage road* – in the UK this is known as a *service road*.

In the UK, the term *outside lane* refers to the higher-speed overtaking lane (*passing lane* in the US) closest to the centre of the road, while *inside lane* refers to the lane closer to the edge of the road. In the US, *outside lane* is only used in the context of a turn, in which case it depends on which direction the road is turning (i.e., if the road bends right the left lane is the outside lane, but if the road bends left the right lane is the outside lane). Both also refer to *slow* and *fast lanes* (even though all actual traffic speeds may be at or even above the legal speed limit). UK traffic officials, firefighters and police officers refer to Lanes 1, 2 and 3 as *slow*, *middle* and *fast lanes* respectively. In the US the meanings are exactly reversed, with Lane 1 referring to the fast lane and so on.

In the UK, *drink driving* is against the law, while in the US the term is *drunk driving*. The legal term in the US is *driving while intoxicated* (DWI) or *Driving under the Influence of Alcohol* (DUI). The equivalent legal phrase in the UK is *Drunk in Charge of a Motor Vehicle* (DIC), or more commonly *driving with excess alcohol*.

i. Greetings

When Christmas is explicitly mentioned in a greeting, the universal phrasing in North America is *Merry Christmas*. In the UK, *Happy Christmas* is also heard. It is increasingly common for Americans to say *Happy Holidays*, referring to all *winter holidays* (*Christmas, Yule, New Year's Day, Hanukkah, Divali, St. Lucia Day and Kwanzaa*) while avoiding any specific religious reference. *Season's Greetings* is a less common phrase in both America and Britain.

j. Entertainment

On English television, each year of a show is referred to as a *series*, while on American television each year is referred to as a *season*. Additionally, *the entire run of a show is called a series in American English and several series can take place in the same fictional universe*.

For example, in American English ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation’ and ‘Star Trek: Deep Space Nine’ are two separate series that ran for seven seasons each, in British English each show consisted of seven series. It should be noted that DVD boxed sets of a year's worth of episodes are rarely renamed when sold outside of their country of origin. In other words, you would still buy *Series 3 of Red Dwarf* in American stores and *Season 3 of Babylon 5* in British stores.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

Discuss the prominent stylistic differences between AmE and BrE

4.0 CONCLUSION

American English and British English have been used intermittently to the extent that it has become, to some extent, difficult in separating them in most cases. For instance words such as *bill* (AmE *paper money*, BrE and AmE *invoice*) and *biscuit* (AmE: BrE's *scone*, BrE: AmE's *cookie*) are used regularly in both AmE and BrE, but mean different things in each form. As chronicled by Winston Churchill, the opposite meanings of the verb ‘to table’ created a misunderstanding during a meeting of the Allied forces; in BrE ‘to table an item on an agenda’ means to open it up for discussion, whereas in AmE, it means to remove it from discussion.

In the UK, the word *whilst* may be used as a conjunction (as an alternative to while, especially prevalent in some dialects), but while is used as a noun. In AmE only *while* is used in both contexts. For example, *I will be a while* versus *whilst/while you were out, your friend called*. To Americans the word *whilst*, in any context, seems very archaic or pretentious or both. In some regions of England, the word *while* is used to mean "until", so *whilst* may be used in spoken English to avoid confusion. In the UK, generally the term *fall* meaning "autumn" is obsolete. Although found often from Elizabethan to Victorian literature, continued understanding of the word is usually ascribed to its continued use in America.

In the UK, the term *period* for *a full stop* is now obsolete. For example, Tony Blair said, "Terrorism is wrong, full stop", whereas in AmE, "Terrorism is wrong, period."*Fitted* is used in both conventions as an adjective (*fitted sheets* are the same size as the mattress) and as the past tense of *fit* ("to suffer epilepsy"); however *fit* and *fitting* do not denote epileptic seizure in ordinary British use (though that usage is common within medical circles), as the same effect is achieved by *to have a fit or to throw a fit*.

5.0 SUMMARY

Most scholars believe that the major difference between AmE and BrE lies in spelling but as we have exhaustively shown here it goes beyond it. In the early 18th century, English spelling was not standardised. Different standards became noticeable after the publishing of influential dictionaries. Current BrE spellings follow, for the most part, those of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). Many of the now characteristic AmE spellings were introduced, although often not created; by Noah Webster in his *An American Dictionary of the English Language* of 1828.Webster was a strong proponent of spelling reform for reasons that are both philological and nationalistic. Subsequent spelling adjustments in the UK had little effect on present-day US spelling, and vice versa. While, in many cases, AmE deviated in the 19th century from mainstream British spelling; on the other hand, it has also often retained older forms. From the vast exploration of the usage in both dialects of English, there are clear-cut differences in both usages. Both dialects are identical and constitute the rich contemporary English usage.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions very clearly:

i. Distinguish AmE treatment of time, date, transportation and entertainment from that of BrE.
ii. AmE and BrE share similar lexical and morphological properties. Identify the similar lexical and morphological items.
iii. Even in writing of correspondences, there are marked differences between AmE and BrE. What are the differences?
iv. In education, seasons, proper noun identification, there are differences between AmE and BrE. Distinguish them with examples.
v. Contemporary English usage is the intermingling of AmE and BrE. Discuss with ample examples.

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UNIT 5 AUSTRALIAN/NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH VARIETIES

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall study another unique dialect of English which has also affected the international intelligibility of the language. Australia is a pure English nation colonized by Britain. The English language dialect in use has developed to a very significant level to the extent that Australian English is quite identifiable. Close to Australia is New Zealand and both countries share same colonial experiences. New Zealand English, like Australian English, also has significant markers which identifies it. Australian English is affected by the aborigines existing in the country. The aborigine languages affected the phonological, lexical and the syntactic properties of the dialect of English. We shall study the nature and significant markers of Australian English (AusEng) and New Zealand English (NzEng) and through this process, show the contributions of both dialects in the mainstream contemporary English usage.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- recognize Australian and New Zealand English dialects;
- understand the unique markers of the dialects;
- distinguish the two dialects from the other dialects of English;
- use BrE and other varieties as part of contemporary English usage; and
- apply the basic rules inherent in the usage.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Australian English began diverging from British English shortly after the foundation of the Australian penal colony of New South Wales (NSW) in 1788. British convicts sent there, including the Cockneys of London, came mostly from large English cities; and they were joined by free settlers, military personnel, and administrators, who often brought their families. In 1827, Peter Cunningham, in his book *Two Years in New South Wales*, reported that native-born white Australians of the time- known as "currency lads and lasses"- spoke with a distinctive accent and vocabulary, with a strong Cockney influence. The transportation of convicts to Australia ended in 1868, but immigration of free settlers from Britain, Ireland and elsewhere continued.

Some American and British English variants exist side-by-side, as TV and *telly* (an abbreviation of *television*). British words predominate, however: as *mobile* or *mobilephone* instead of *cell phone*, and *lift* instead of *elevator*. In many cases -*telly* versus TV and SMS versus *text*, *freeway* and *motorway*, for instance - regional, social and ethnic variation within Australia typically defines word usage. Australian English is most similar to New Zealand English, each having a shared history and geographical proximity. Both use the expression *different to* (also encountered in British English, but not American) as well as *different from.*

New Zealand English (NZEng) is the form of the English language used in New Zealand. New Zealand English is close to Australian English in pronunciation, but has several subtle differences often overlooked by people from outside these countries. Some of these differences show New Zealand English to have more affinity with the English of southern England than Australian English does. Several of the differences also show the influence of Māori speech. The most striking difference from Australian and other forms of English (although shared partly with South African English) is the flattened /i/ of New Zealand English. The New Zealand accent also has some Scottish influences, particularly in the southern regions of the South Island - a result of the large number of early Scottish settlers who arrived in the 19th century.

A distinct New Zealand variant of the English language has been in existence since at least 1912, though it probably goes back further than that. From the beginning of British settlement on the islands, a new dialect began to form by adapting Māori words to describe the *flora* and *fauna* of New Zealand, for which English did not have any words of its own.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain the major linguistic influences in the development of Australian and New Zealand English dialects.

3.2 Australian English Variety (AusEng)

Australian English is also a very popular English dialect. It also has unique markers which help in identifying it among the vast speakers of English. Australian English is a non-rhotic dialect. It is most similar to New Zealand English and bears some resemblance to dialects from the Southeast of England, particularly those of 'Cockney' and 'Received Pronunciation'. Like most dialects of English, it is distinguished primarily by its *vowel phonology*. Let us examine the nature of the dialect beginning with the phonological properties.

Australian English has many words that some consider unique to the language. One of the best known is *outback*, meaning 'a remote, sparsely populated area'. Another is *bush*, meaning 'either a native forest or a country area in general'. However, both terms have been widely used in many English-speaking countries. *The convicts* brought other similar words, phrases and usages to Australia. Many words used frequently by country Australians are, or were, also used in all or part of England, with variations in meaning. For example, *creek* in Australia, as in North America, means 'a stream or small river', whereas in the UK it means 'a small watercourse flowing into the sea'; *paddock* in Australia means 'field', whereas in the UK it means 'a small enclosure for livestock'; *bush* or *scrub* in Australia, as in North America, means 'a wooded area', whereas in England they are commonly used only in proper names (such as *Shepherd's Bush* and *Wormwood Scrubs*). Australian English and several British English dialects (for example, Cockney, Scouse, Glaswegian and Geordie) both use the word *mate* for a close friend of the same sex and increasingly for a platonic friend of the opposite sex (rather than the conventional meaning of "a spouse"), but this usage has also become common in some other varieties of English.

The origins of other words are not as clear, or are disputed. *Dinkum* (or "fair dinkum") can mean "true", "is that true?" or "this is the truth!" among other things, depending on context and inflection. It is often claimed that *dinkum* dates back to the Australian goldrushes of the 1850s and that it is derived from the Cantonese (or Hokkien) *ding kam*, meaning, and "top gold". But scholars give greater credence to the conjecture that it originated from the extinct East Midlands dialect in England, where *dinkum* (or *dincum*) meant "hard work" or "fair work", which was also the original meaning in Australian English.The

derivative *dinky*-di means 'true' or devoted: a '*dinky-di Aussie*' is a 'true Australian'. However, this expression is limited to describing objects or actions that are characteristically Australian. The words *dinkum* or *dinky-di* and phrases like *true blue* are widely purported to be typical Australian sayings, even though they are more commonly used in jest or parody than as authentic slang. Similarly, *g'day*, a stereotypical Australian greeting, is no longer synonymous with "good day" in other varieties of English (it can be used at night time) and is never used as an expression for "farewell", as "good day" is in other countries.

Australian spelling is usually the same as British spelling, with only a few exceptions. *The Macquarie Dictionary* is generally used by publishers, schools, universities and governments as the standard spelling reference in Australia. Well-known differences to British spelling include: *program* is more common than 'programme'; *jail* is prevalent, *gaol* is generally still used in official contexts. There is a widely-held belief in Australia that controversies over spelling result from the "Americanization" of Australian English; the influence of American English in the late 20th century, but the debate over spelling is much older. For example, a pamphlet entitled *The So-Called "American Spelling"*, published in Sydney some time before 1901, explained that there is no valid etymological reason for the preservation of the *u* in such words as *honor, labor*, alluding to older British spellings which also used the *-or* ending. The pamphlet also claimed that "the tendency of people in Australasia is to excise the *u*, and one of the Sydney morning papers habitually does this, while the other generally follows the older form". The Australian Labor Party retains the *-or* ending it officially adopted in 1912. However, while many Australian newspapers did formerly "excise the u", in words like *colour*, this is no longer the case. The town of Victor Harbor has the Victor Harbour Railway Station and the municipality's official website speculates that excising the *u* from the town's name was originally a "spelling error". This continues to cause confusion in how the town is named in official and unofficial documents.

Australian English makes frequent use of diminutives. They are formed in various ways and are often used to indicate familiarity. Some examples are *arvo* (afternoon), *barbie* (barbecue), *footy* (Australian rules *football* or *rugby* league football). They also use litotes such as "you're not wrong" (= you're right). Many phrases once common to Australian English have become stereotypes and caricaturized exaggerations, and have largely disappeared from everyday use. Among the words less used are *cobber*, *strewth*, *you beaut* and *crikey*; and stereotypical phrases like *flat out like a lizard drinking* are rarely used without being jocular. The phrase *put a shrimp on the barbie* is a misquotation from a phrase made famous by Paul Hogan in tourism advertisements that are aired in

America. Australians use the word *prawn* rather than *shrimp*. Many Australians actually dislike the phrase *for this reason*, thus choose to ignore the person who says it, or point it out bluntly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the influence of aboriginal dialects in the development of Australian English.

3.3 New Zealand English

There are marked similarities between New Zealand English and Australian English also with the BrE and AmE. Where there is a distinct difference between British and US spelling (such as *colour/color* and *travelled/traveled*), the British spelling is universally found in New Zealand - New Zealand English sticks very closely to British English in spelling. Some Americanisms have begun to creep in through their exposure in mass media (such as "thru" for "through" in very informal contexts like texting and on take-away signs), though these spellings are non-standard. Similarly, the British standard name for the last letter of the alphabet, *zed*, is standard within New Zealand. New Zealand is perhaps unique among English-speaking countries in its spelling of the word *fjord*, favouring the spelling *fiord*. This is particularly apparent in the name of *Fiordland*, a rugged region in the country's southwest.

Māori influence. Many local everyday words have been borrowed from the Māori language, including words for local flora, fauna, and the natural environment. The dominant influence of Māori on New Zealand English is lexical. A 1999 estimate based on the Wellington corpora of written and spoken New Zealand English put the proportion of words of Māori origin at approximately 0.6%, mostly place and personal names. Māori is also ever-present and has a significant conceptual influence in the legislature, government, and community agencies (e.g. health and education), where legislation requires that proceedings and documents are translated into Māori (under certain circumstances, and when requested). Political discussion and analysis of issues of sovereignty, environmental management, health, and social well being thus rely on Māori at least in part. Māori as a spoken language is particularly important wherever community consultation occurs.

In New Zealand, the word "milk bar" refers only to the milk bar of the 1950s and 1960s, a place that served non-alcoholic drinks, primarily milkshakes, tea and sometimes coffee. Ice creams were also served. A traditional difference, between the New Zealand "varsity" and the Australian "uni" (for "university"), is rapidly disappearing with the adoption of "uni" into New Zealand vocabulary.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Identify and assess the relationship between New Zealand English and Australian English/British English/American English.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Australian and New Zealand English Dialects are important dialects because they have contributed enormously in the development of English language generally. Both dialects have influence from the aborigines giving rise to special pronunciations and lexical properties that mark them out as unique varieties of English. From the deep studies undertaken in the course of exploring these two varieties it is clear that both varieties have similarities with British English and American English and in some situations certain items have become absorbed as a result of communication. Some Australian actors use their natural accents in international films and television programs. Australian actors in non-Australian productions sometimes use exaggerated Broad Australian accents. The internet also helped increasing this dialectal mingling among the varieties.

More so, these varieties, AusEng and NzEng, have encouraged linguistic creativities in English language because of the influence of the aboriginal intrusions into the mainstream English language. Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) is a term referring to the various varieties of the English language used by Indigenous Australians. These varieties, which developed differently in different parts of Australia, vary along a continuum, from forms close to Standard English to more nonstandard forms. The furthest extent of this is *Kriol*, which is regarded by linguists as a distinct language from English. Speakers change between different forms according to social context. Several features of AAE are shared with creole languages spoken in nearby countries, such as *TokPisin* in Papua New Guinea, *Pijin* in the Solomon Islands, and *Bislama* in Vanuatu.AAE terms, or derivative terms, are sometimes used by the broader Australian community. This is particularly true in outback areas, where the indigenous population is generally more significant than in urban and suburban areas. This is also the same thing with the influence of Maori language on New Zealand English.

5.0 SUMMARY

Australian and New Zealand English are dialects of English with standard forms identifying the written and spoken aspects. Australian English has marked phonological and lexical properties that identify the users. Comparatively there are relationships between the form of the dialect and the function with that of British English. Because of the

influence of the entertainment industry and the internet, the influence of Americanisms is also observed in AusEng. In New Zealand variety, we observe a close relationship with Australian English. One of the reasons may be the proximity of both countries to each other. The influence of the aboriginal languages in both dialects is also very prominent. There are marked lexical, phonological and syntactic aberrations that are prominent in both dialects and which have been unconsciously or consciously absorbed in the mainstream English. Both varieties constitute part of the contemporary English usage as these dialects have been absorbed partially in Standard English which constitutes the language of instruction and interaction.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

i. Trace the historical development of Australian and New Zealand English.
ii. "Australian English and New Zealand English are same yet different" Discuss appropriately.
iii. Assess carefully the influence of aboriginal English on Australian English and Maori language on New Zealand English?
iv. Identify the marked phonological differences between AusEng/NzEng and Standard English.
v. Select the lexical and syntactic elements in both dialects and compare their usage in Standard English.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Bauer, L.; Warran, P. & Bardsley, D. (2007) "New Zealand English", *Journal of the International Phonetic Association 37* (1): 97–102.

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