

A Synopsis of the Lexical Variations in British and American English

Md. Faruquzzaman Akan¹, Gaus Chowdhury¹, A.K.M. Mazharul Islam¹, Anjum Mishu¹, Md. Mostaq Ahamed¹, Karem Abdellatif Ahmed Mohamed^{1,2}, & Irin Sultana¹

¹ Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia

² Sadat Academy, Egypt

Correspondence: Md. Faruquzzaman Akan, Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.

Received: December 11, 2023

Accepted: March 2, 2024

Online Published: April 12, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v14n4p306

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n4p306>

Abstract

The focal point of this research work is to find out the lexical distinctions between British and American varieties of English and their persistently reciprocal impacts. Over the years, both the British and American vocabularies have been influencing each other, specially due to politics, economics, diplomatic relationships, information technology and globalisation. From time to time, the variance of vocabulary in the two varieties results in increasing the number of English synonyms which is, in fact, an important asset for the language. But sometimes, the synonyms may cause serious differences in meaning as some words may mean something in British English; the same may denote something else in American English and vice versa. One should, therefore, be careful and consistent about their use. It is most probable that as a result of various procedures of the change in lexical meaning and language, the two varieties would someday merge by turning them into an identical entity. So, this paper intends to provide the reader and/or the user of English with the correct application of the two varieties for our day-to-day life.

Keywords: BrE, AmE, Lexis, Variety, Synonym, Semantics, Compounding, False Friend

1. Introduction

The English language has a fairly plethora of varieties or dialects, such as British English, American English, Australian English, Canadian English, Singaporean English, New Zealand English, South African English, Indian English etc. but British English (i.e. BrE) and American English (i.e. AmE) are the most widely used globally. Although it is usually believed that American English is very innovative, specially, in its vocabulary, rather than British English, there has not been much research done so far to distinguish between these varieties. The differentiating method of spelling, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and accent between British and American English are, in general, a reference or standard for its other variants spreading throughout the world, either for speaking, writing, or teaching. Outside North America and Australia, most of the dialects of English of the former British Empire are to different extents based on British English but many countries have developed their own unique dialects, specially, in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. Here, the term *lexis* (or, vocabulary) refers to a set of words of a language used by, or known to, a single individual. It is, in fact, the real strength and valuable treasure of any language. British and American English have significantly different vocabularies and usage. So, the most important rule of thumb is to try to be careful about their grammar and usage. If one decides to use British vocabulary, one has to be consistent with that. Sometimes the synonyms may cause serious differences in meaning because some words may mean something in British English, it could be something different in American English and vice versa. The main purpose of this study is to make the major differences between British and American English easy to understand by removing possible confusion about them. In this connection, to show how meaning may change and confuse one when an expression in these two varieties occurs, the following funny story can be quoted (Akan, 2017, p. 7):

A British woman got acquainted with an American woman during her visit to the US. One day, when they were visiting places of interest, the British woman said, "Let's have a rest. I'm already knocked up." The American woman responded saying, "My heartiest congratulations." Hearing this, the British woman became a little angry and asked, "Why do you say that?"

In this situation, it is the phrase 'knock up' that has caused the confusion. In the UK, 'knocked up' means 'very much tired', while in the US, this phrase means 'pregnant'. The phrase is the same; however, the phrase expresses different meanings in different countries and brings about misunderstanding. What we can, in fact, learn and understand from the above conversation between the two ladies is suggestive of serious misinterpretation caused by the meaning of the same phrasal verb (i.e. *knock up*) in British and American English. So, we can, specifically, say that appropriate meaning in the respective variety is very important to understand the language, which should be considered when meaning is different in any domain of that language. Moreover, we can cite a popular saying from the Bangla language that can further reflect a similar incident (though in a different setting): এক দেশের বুলি আরেক দেশের গালি। | æk ðeʃer buli arek ðeʃer gali | i.e. one variety or dialect could be abusive to the user of the other variety or dialect of the same language. Here, the term 'বুলি' refers to a 'dialect' and the term 'গালি' denotes an 'abusive word'. For this reason, one should be careful about using the vocabulary of the same language in their different varieties (or, domains) so as to avoid the above-mentioned embarrassing situation.

2. Literature Review

Although English is a very significant international *lingua franca*, most ESL and EFL learners find it confusing for its numerous varieties, specially in the field of vocabulary. However, British and American English are the two major ones with a few distinctive features. So far as we have come across, no comprehensive study has been performed yet except the publication of traditional dictionaries with some distinction between BrE and AmE. According to Leech (2003), the mutual influence of both the varieties on each other, and particularly, the ‘Americanisation’ of British English is not restricted to the lexical component of the language; in fact, the influence of American English also affects English syntax to a lesser extent, as is the case of modal auxiliaries. As stated by Baugh (1993), “A second quality often attributed to American English is archaism, the preservation of old features of the language that have gone out of use in the standard speech of England (p. 340).” In discussing the comparison of vocabulary, Millward (1996) suggests that there are three primary semantic domains of difference between BrE and AmE, i.e. food, clothing, and transportation. In accordance with Rahim and Akan (2008-2009), “The vocabulary of AmE is much easier to get the meaning than that of BrE. e.g. ‘necktie’ (AmE) in place of ‘tie’ (BrE)”. So, American culture and its language are familiar to all Brits. However, it is a matter of fact that Rahim and Akan (2008-2009, p. 111) say, “Nowadays, the two varieties of English are becoming more and more expressive for a huge borrowing of words from each other.” Here, we can quote George Bernard Shaw’s (1942) famous comment, England and America are two countries separated by a common language.

3. Discussion

The introduction and foundation of the English language in America took place along with Dutch, German, French, Spanish and other languages, beginning with the English settlement of Jamestown in 1607 and the landing of the Puritans in Massachusetts in 1620. This first period of immigration and the establishment of the settlements of the original thirteen colonies are due to the greatest linguistic influence. The English speakers first settled in New England between 1620 and 1640. A second Puritan colony center was founded in the Lower Connecticut River Valley (on the western side of the river) in 1635, following the Puritans’ colonisation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1620. The Connecticut River still remains an important regional dialect boundary, by separating the *r-less* dialect of Boston from the more *r-ful* dialects in western New England. In 1638, the Rhode Island Colony was founded by the religious dissenters from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and another distinctive dialect sub-region was formed in the Narragansett Bay area (Sanyal, 2013).

The influx of immigrants from other regions was a continuous process. The Dutch settled in New York in 1614, but the colony was seized by the British in 1664. At that time, around 10,000 Dutch settlers were living there. Then Welsh, Scots-Irish, Germans, and a mix of English people settled in Pennsylvania and more of Scots-Irish immigrants set them up extensively in the Appalachians. Virginia, one of the South Atlantic States, attracted a range of social outcasts-criminals, royalists, indentured servants and also the Puritans from England; religious and political refugees from France (Huguenots/Calvinists) together with inland settlers, Scots-Irish and Germans (Turner, 1997). The cultures of Britain and America differ fundamentally in their histories, economies, environments, and social organisations. British and American spoken English is mostly intelligible but their differences are enough to cause misunderstanding or even complete communication failure. British English is used in former colonies of the British Empire, such as in Africa (including South Africa and Egypt), the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh), Malta, Australia, New Zealand, and in Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand). All Middle Eastern countries also use it except Israel and Saudi Arabia (Carlo, 2013). American English is widely used as a *lingua franca* (or a second language) in many parts of the world, including East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and China); the Americas (excluding the former British colonies Canada, Jamaica, and the Bahamas), and Liberia, in Africa.

A considerable passive understanding of much American English vocabulary in Britain has been influenced by the US films and television programmes and the younger generation, to be specific, uses them actively. However, the opposite scenario is less commonly found. In the USA, British films and TV programmes are often seen sufficiently, which means that the growth in awareness of the UK vocabulary should not be underrated. The formerly fairly obvious patterns of variation in lexical elements have reduced for global borrowing. Nowadays, extensive borrowing has been taking place between the two varieties. So, a reasonably comprehensive list of synonymous words of the two varieties is shown side by side in this study for the sake of better conception and comparison. Many words that Americans use almost exclusively are understood by most Britons, and vice versa. But there are other words which can cause difficulties. For example, most Britons know that Americans call *biscuits* ‘cookies’ and *flats* ‘apartments’, but not so many Americans know what an *alumnus* or a *fender* is in British English. Also, Americans know that what they call a *yard* is a *garden* in Britain and that *trucks* are *lorries*, but common British English words like *plimsolls*, or *off-licence* may mean nothing to Americans. In the preface to A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language, Webster (1806, p. vii) mentions,

“No great change should be made at once, nor should any change be made which violates established principles, creates great inconvenience, or obliterates the radicals of the language. But gradual changes to accommodate the written and spoken language especially when they purify words from corruptions, improve the regular analogies of a language and illustrate, etymology, are not only proper, but indispensable.”

In the field of linguistics, the metaphorical phrase *false friend* is frequently used in order to indicate the existence of some lexical items in two languages which are similar in form but different in meaning (Hill, 1982; Prado, 2001; Dominguez and Nerlich, 2002; Schlesinger and Malkiel, 2005). They are called false friends because they appear to be easy to grasp, learn and understand at first sight, but unfortunately for non-native speakers, the words’ formal appearance is not really indicative of their true meaning. e.g.

English- ‘gift’ means ‘present’. vs. German- ‘gift’ means ‘poison’.

Nevertheless, the above instances are from different languages, it often occurs within the varieties of the same language. For example, we can cite some words that we mentioned before, such as rubber, nervy etc.

4. Research Findings

British and American English are the two distinct varieties of the English language. A good number of British vocabularies are popular and frequent in the USA and vice versa. The same word in Britain and America can have completely different meanings depending on what side of the pond you are standing. However, over the last half a century or so TV shows and films have done much for the mutual familiarisation of British and American vocabularies. It is evident that the poor non-native speaker has an almost impossible task to keep the two varieties separated. So, the best s/he can do is to get a good reference book. Nation (2001) advocates, English vocabulary can be divided into two types, such as receptive and productive vocabulary. The first type of vocabulary refers to the words known by native speakers and foreign language learners but mostly never used, whereas the second type refers to the words which are always used actively either in speaking or writing. Here in our current study, the differences between British and American vocabularies will broadly be represented in the following seven categories:

a. Meaning Constraints in Lexis/Words:

In British and American varieties, some words are at times used alternatively though they do not have exactly the same meaning. For example, what is ‘football’ in the UK is ‘soccer’ in the US and the UK ‘rugby’ is the US ‘football’. Also, when a British says ‘I want to go to the bathroom’, it does not necessarily mean s/he likes to go to the toilet but when an American says ‘I want to go to the bathroom’, s/he euphemistically means to use the toilet. Crystal (2003) states that the word ‘flyover’ exists in both varieties. However, the AmE ‘flyover’ is the equivalent of the BrE ‘flypast’, while the BrE ‘flyover’ is the equivalent of the AmE ‘overpass’. Let’s have a look at some other examples below:

British English	American English
angry (annoyed, upset etc.)	mad (BrE- mentally disordered)
autumn (in between summer & winter)	fall (in between summer & winter, a verb)
bat (in table tennis)	paddle (in ping pong)
bathroom (specially used for a shower)	washroom, restroom (usually with a toilet)
chat show (a gossip on the TV or radio)	talk show (a discussion on the TV or radio)
chemist/chemist’s (a retail seller of drugs, toiletries etc.)	pharmacist/drugstore (a seller of prescribed drugs, toiletries etc.)
crossroads (the same or different surface)	intersection (the same surface)
cupboard (furniture for clothes, food, utensils etc.)	closet (for clothes etc.), cupboard (in a kitchen for food, utensils etc.)
first floor (the second level of a house)	ground floor (the ground level of a house)
football (AmE- prolate spheroid balls)	soccer (spherical balls)
garden (for growing flowers, plants etc.)	yard (BrE- a lawn, surrounding a house)
headmaster (specially of a school)	principal (BrE- of a college or university), head teacher
holiday (rest for a specific day or event)	vacation (BrE- vacation is longer)
ill (physically)	sick (BrE- both physically and mentally)
kip (informal- for a short & long period)	sleep (for a long period)
marks (numerical)	grades (alphabetical)
note (a bank note)	bill (payment of any dues)
parcel (an object wrapped in paper)	package (BrE- a parcel is larger, an offer)
pitch (a marked-out ground area for sports)	field (an area of ground for crops or grass)
plaster (an out cover of the body or walls)	Band-Aid (a trademark for a bandage)

practice (a noun)	practice (both a noun & a verb)
puckish (slightly starving)	hungry (starving)
sea (huge saltwater in a localized area)	ocean (BrE- bigger than a sea)
staffroom (AmE- for any employees)	teachers' lounge (only for teachers)
tin (a metal container, a sheet of iron also)	can (BrE- could be a verb also)
toilet (for clearing solid & liquid waste)	bathroom (for bathing with a toilet)
tram (an electric vehicle for travelling)	trolley (for shopping)
trolley (specific for shopping)	cart (specific for serving food & drink etc.)

There are a few curious issues about some words in BrE and AmE which have reversed meanings, for example, trapezium vs. trapezoid. We know that 'trapezium' and 'trapezoid' refer to the same four-sided polygon. But in BrE, a trapezium is used to describe a quadrilateral with one pair of parallel sides, while in AmE, it is called a trapezoid. In contrast, a trapezoid in BrE, refers to a quadrilateral with no parallel sides, whereas in AmE, it is termed a trapezium.

b. Spelling Variations in Lexis/Words:

The spelling of vocabularies had not yet been standardised when (between the 16th and 17th centuries) the British, in fact, introduced the language to the Americans. The British and American spelling variations often cause changes in vocabulary. In most cases, the AmE spelling in the synonymous words is easier than those of BrE. For example, kilogramme (BrE) – kilogram (AmE), cheque (BrE) – check (AmE), likeable (BrE) – likable (AmE) etc. The words like 'archaeology', 'acknowledgement' etc are now used in both the varieties without dropping the middle vowel 'a' and 'e'. Moreover, most often BrE uses '-ise' but AmE uses '-ize' at the end of a verb. Let's have more instances in the following diagram:

British English	American English
adze	adz
aeroplane	airplane
aesthetic	esthetic
aging	ageing
aluminium	aluminum
anaemia	anemia
analyse	analyze
annexe	annex
anywhere	anyplace
arse	ass
axe	ax
candidature	candidacy
centenary	centennial
centre	center
catalogue	catalog
chilli	chili
colour	color
cosy	cozy
defence	defense

dentine	dentin
doughnut	donut
draught	draft
dreamt	dreamed
ensure	insure
glycerine	glycerin
grey	gray
jewellery	jewelry
kerb	curb
manoeuvre	maneuver
maths	math (BrE- widely used)
mum, mummy	mom
plough	plow
prophecy	prophesy
pyjamas	pajamas
racialist, racialism	racist, racism
skilful	skillful
sport	sports
towards	toward
traveller	traveler
tyre	tire
vise	vice
whilst	while
whisky	whiskey, whisky
woollen	woolen
zip	zipper

Sometimes, the two varieties have different spellings though they may have the same pronunciation and vice versa. e.g. aesthetic (BrE) vs. esthetic (AmE)

c. Distinctly Different Lexis/Words:

The two varieties of English have their own set of vocabularies. Having the same meaning, they differ a lot in their look or appearance. For example, to mean the same thing BrE uses the term ‘post’, whereas AmE uses ‘mail’. We have more words of this type as shown below:

British English	American English
afters (informal)	dessert
anorak, jacket, windcheater	jacket, windbreaker
aubergine	eggplant
badge	button
banger	sausage

barrister	attorney
bauble	Christmas bauble
Biro (a trademark)	ballpoint
bloke, chap	guy
bonnet (of a car)	hood (of a car)
boot (of a car)	trunk (of a car)
braces (of a dress)	suspenders (of a dress)
broly	umbrella
brackets	parentheses
briefs	trunks
brooch	pin
butty, sarnie	sandwich
caretaker	janitor
cashier	teller
catapult	slingshot
cooker	stove, range
coriander	cilantro
cot	crib
curtain	drape
cutlery	silverware
diversion	detour
draw (in sports)	tie (in sports)
draughts	checkers
dummy	pacifier
dungarees	overalls
duvet	comforter
fire (a verb)	sack (a verb)
flat	apartment
footpath	trail
fringe	bangs
funfair	carnival
gherkin	pickle
glue	gum
grill	broil
hazards	flashers
hob	stovetop

hoover (a verb)	vacuum (a verb)
insect	bug
interval	intermission
knackered	exhausted
knave (in card games)	jack (in card games)
knickers	panties
liquidizer	blender
love	honey, sweetheart
lorry	truck
maize	corn
marrow	(summer) squash
mate (informal)	buddy
motorway	highway, freeway, expressway, interstate
murder	homicide
nick	steal, pinch
paraffin	kerosene
packet, box	pack, package
pilchards	sardines
pinny	apron
pip	seed
platform	track
porridge	oatmeal
postman	mailman, mail/letter carrier
pram, pushchair	stroller, baby carriage, buggy, pushchair
pub	bar, tavern
pullover, jumper	sweater
puddings	dessert
queue	line
railway	railroad
reel	spool
return (ticket/fare)	round-trip (ticket/fare)
ring (phone)	call (phone)
rounders	baseball
rucksack	backpack
saloon (of a car)	sedan (of a car)
scone	biscuit

Sellotape (a trademark)	Scotch tape (a trademark)
silencer (of a car)	muffler (of a car)
skip	Dumpster (a brand name)
spot	pimple
subway	underpass
sweets	candy
tap	faucet
teat	nipple
term	semester
flip-flops	thongs
tick (a symbol)	check (a symbol)
to let	to rent
treacle	molasses
trousers	pants, trousers
underground, tube (train)	subway (train)
vomit	barf (informal)
waistcoat	vest
wangle	finagle
wc (water closet), loo (informal), toilet	bathroom, restroom

d. Slightly Different Lexis/Words:

There are some words commonly found to be easily understandable with the same meaning for both the varieties though they look slightly different. These words could be used interchangeably as they do not usually pose any serious difficulties for the users of the two varieties. The table below shows some more instances,

British English	American English
anticlockwise	counterclockwise
antenatal	prenatal
appetizer	starter
beetroot	beet
coffin	casket, coffin
engine	motor, engine
engaged	busy
film	movie
gearbox (of a car)	transmission (of a car)
graduate	alumnus
handbag	purse, handbag
jam	jelly
jug	pitcher, jug

kettle	teakettle
lad	boy
lass	girl
letterbox	mailbox
lift	elevator
luggage	baggage
lurgy	germ
naught	zero (BrE- well-known & widely used)
nappy	diaper
nightdress	nightgown
pavement	sidewalk, pedestrian path
petrol	gasoline, gas
postbox	mailbox
presenter	host
rubbish	garbage
sailingboat	sailboat
seesaw	teether-totter
serviette	napkin
shoelace	shoestring
shop (a noun)	store (a noun)
socket, power point	out-let, receptacle
squeezer	juicer
sofa, settee	couch
starter	appetizer
taxi	cab, taxicab
tarmac	blacktop (without stone)
telly (informal)	television
tie	necktie
timetable, schedule	schedule
tortoise	turtle
torch	flashlight
trainers	sneakers
tube (informal- train)	subway, metro
wardrobe	closet
windscreen	windshield
wallet	billfold, wallet

e. Compounding of Lexis/Words:

A compound word is a word often made up of two or more words working or putting together to create an equivalent meaning in the two varieties. This is, in fact, one of the most productive and unique ways of vocabulary building. Although there are three kinds of compound words: open, closed, and hyphenated, this study deals only with open types which are written as separate or detached words. For example,

British English	American English
academic staff	faculty
air hostess	flight attendant
beauty parlour	beauty shop
block of flats	apartment building
break time	recess
candy floss	cotton candy
capsicum	bell pepper
caravan, camper van	motor home, wagon, trailer
car park	parking lot
cash card	ATM card
chest of drawers	dresser, bureau
chips	French fries
chuffed	pleased
churn	milk can
city centre	downtown
cling film	plastic wrap
come over	come round
cookery book	cookbook
crisp	potato chip
current account	checking account
curriculum vitae	resume
cuppa (informal)	cup of tea
drain	sewer grate
dressing gown	bath robe, robe
driving licence	driver's license
drinks party	cocktail party
drawing pins	push pins, thumb tacks
dual carriageway	divided highway
dustbin	trash can
dustman	garbage collector
eggy bread	French toast
fairy cake	cup cake

fancy dress	costume
Father Christmas	Santa Claus
fill in	fill out
fire engine	fire truck
fortnight	two weeks
frying pan	skillet
full stop	period
girl guide	girl scout
going for a walk	hiking
goods train	freight train
half an hour	a half hour
hand basin, wash basin	wash bowl, sink
have got	have
hired car, hire car	rental car, rental, rent-a-car
high street	main street
hockey	field hockey
indicators (of a car)	turn signals, signal (of a car)
icing sugar	powdered sugar, confectioner's sugar
jacket potato	baked potato
jumble sale	yard sale, rummage sale
letter box	mail slot
little finger	pinkie
market garden	truck farm
mark(ing) scheme	grading scheme
mobile phone	cellular phone
mucking around	fooling around
mince	ground beef
main road	highway
nail varnish	nail polish
naughts and crosses	tic-tac-toe
noticeboard	bulletin board
number plate	license plate
nutter	crazy person
packed lunch	bag lunch
pay rise	pay raise
pen drive, USB drive	thumb drive

people carrier	minivan
pillar box	mailbox
the plough	big dipper
polo neck	turtle neck
primary school	elementary school
public toilet	rest room, public bathroom
railway line	railroad track
rasher	slice of bacon
reception	front desk
reverse charge	collect call, call collect
reversing lights (of a car)	back up lights, tail lights (of a car)
ring road	beltway
roadworks	roadwork, construction zone
roundabout	traffic circle, roundabout
road surface	pavement
sales assistant, shop assistant	salesclerk
school dinner	hot lunch, school lunch
secondary school	high school
semi-detached (house)	duplex (house)
shopping centre	(shopping) mall
side walk	pavement
sidelight	parking light
single ticket	one-way ticket
sleeping policeman	speed bump
skip lorry	garbage truck
sprits	hard liquor
spring onion	green onion, scallion
sorry	excuse me
sprinkles	hundreds and thousands
sports day	field day
standard lamp	floor lamp
state school	public school
student hall	dorms, dormitories
Sod's Law	Murphy's Law
tea towel	dish towel
third-party insurance, liability cover	liability insurance

(tele)phone box	telephone booth
ticking over	idling
tracksuit	sweat suit
wagon	freight car
watch strap	watchband
water pistol	water gun
wellingtons (boots), gumboots	rain boots, rubber boots
witness box	witness stand
wing mirror	side-view mirror
zebra crossing	cross walk

f. Idiomatic Expressions of Lexis/Words:

An idiomatic expression is the combination of two or more words giving a meaning that cannot always be understood from its individual components. A number of English idioms that have essentially the same meaning show lexical differences in the two varieties, for instance:

British English	American English
a bargepole	a ten-foot pole
blow one’s own trumpet	blow (or toot) one’s own horn
dilly-daily	beat about the bush
a drop in the ocean	a drop in the bucket
flogging a dead horse	beating a dead horse
have a butcher’s	have a look
a home from home	a home away from home
let the cat out of the bag	spill the beans
a new lease of life	a new lease on life
with a pinch of salt	with a grain of salt
a pack of cards	a deck of cards
a penny-pincher	a cheapskate
be in a pickle	be in hot water
a storm in a teacup	a tempest in a teapot
sweep under the carpet	sweep under the rug
skeleton in the cupboard	skeleton in the closet
throw a spanner	throw a (monkey) wrench
touch wood	knock on wood
take an exam	sit an exam

Idiomatic expressions are usually very complicated to understand in any language. Consequently, special care is needed while using them.

g. Confusing Lexis/Words:

There are some words that are not restricted to a certain variety, rather they can be used in both the varieties. However, they create major meaning problems for the users. For example, in England, if you ask the waiter for the ‘bill’ at the end of your meal (at a restaurant), in America, you have to ask for the ‘check’ because a ‘bill’ in AmE is a synonym for a ‘banknote’ in BrE. There are a large number of (more

than a thousand) words having different meanings or usage in British and American English. A few words of this category are as follows:

British English	American English
blinkers (horses' eye-side leather blockers)	blinkers (indicators of a car)
bath(e) (both a noun & a verb for a shower)	bath(e) (both a noun & a verb for swimming)
casket (a jewellery box)	casket (a coffin)
learnt (the past tense & the past participle of the verb 'learn')	learned (an adjective, the past tense & the past participle of the verb 'learn')
nervy (nervus)	nervy (brave, confident etc.)
the River Thames	the Hudson River
peckish (hungry)	peckish (angry)
peel (both a noun & a verb)	skin (a noun)
rubber (a tool for deleting writing)	rubber (a condom)
solicitor (a legal representative)	solicitor (a door-to-door salesman)
trainer (athletic shoes)	trainer (an instructor of a gym)
trunk (the main stem of a tree)	trunk (the enclosed storage of a car)

5. Conclusion

Although the British Empire no longer exists today, the impact of the English language comes from its global importance and requirement. English is spoken by a huge bulk of the population, so it leads to a unification of the people and allows worldwide communication. It is important to consider that there are differences in the meanings of words in different varieties of English. This has implications for language teaching and learning. Teachers and students need to be aware of these differences and be careful to use the appropriate variety of English for the context they are in. Teachers and students must know that there are particular items that have different meanings in both the varieties and that they must be careful and act in accordance with the context of the situation and with the variety of English that they are using and/or learning. In some cases, the American variant is also used in British one, or vice versa. However, an American English course book will be different from a British English course book with respect to phrases or idioms. For example, an American student may find it odd to have 'at the weekend' written in a lesson, as s/he is used to hearing 'on the weekend' in America. An important point to make is that different doesn't mean wrong. Despite individual differences, there is no evidence to suggest that one language variety is easier to learn or understand than the other. While writing in English in a general context, students should use either UK or US English consistently throughout their piece of writing, specially when preparing for international examinations. This study focuses on lexical differences and might not explore other aspects like pronunciation or grammar. So, any further research may unfold other issues of British and American English vocabularies.

About the Authors

Md. Faruquzzaman Akan, a Bangladeshi national, is presently working at King Khalid University, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the capacity of a lecturer in English. Formerly, he worked at Abudharr Ghifari (Post-graduate) College, Dhaka, Bangladesh as an Assistant Professor of English. Mr. Akan pursued his M.A. in Applied Linguistics and ELT from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has been teaching English as a foreign language for a considerably long period. He has a good number of research papers and academic books in English published both at home and abroad.

Email: f.akan@yahoo.com

Gaus Chowdhury is a lecturer in the English Language Center at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. He received his B.A. and M.A. in English (Language & Literature) from Khulna University, Bangladesh. He also did his CELTA from the UAE. His research interests include CALL, CLIL, and Mobile Platform-based Language Teaching.

Email: azamku09@gmail.com

A.K.M. Mazharul Islam, a Bangladeshi national, is currently working at King Khalid University, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a lecturer in English. He worked for different universities in Bangladesh before joining KKU. He completed his B.A. (Hons.) and M.A. in English from Rajshahi University, Bangladesh. He completed another M.A. in ELT (English Language Teaching) from Dhaka University, Bangladesh. He has published a few papers and is fond of research.

Email: writemazhar@gmail.com; amazharul@kku.edu.sa

Anjum Mishu is a lecturer in the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. She obtained her B.A. and M.A. in English (Language & Literature) from Khulna University, Bangladesh. She also did her CELTA from the UAE. Her research

interests include the Psychoanalytic Study of Literary Texts, Integrating Literature in ELT, Interdisciplinary Studies between Psychology and ELT, and Task-based Language Learning/Teaching.

Email: mishuku27@gmail.com

Md. Mostaq Ahamed, an ex-lecturer at King Khalid University, Abha, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has M.A.s in English Literature, ELT, and Education. He is a Cambridge certified teacher and a Teaching Excellence and Achievement fellow, George Mason University, Virginia, USA. His fields of interest are Applied Linguistics, English Literature, and ELT.

Email: mosvision@yahoo.com

Karem Abdellatif Ahmad Mohamed, an Egyptian by nationality, has been teaching English as an Associate Professor at King Khalid University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He did his Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from AL-Minya University, Egypt in 2006. His specific area of interest is TEFL. He taught in many places; the University of Northern Borders, and Taif University in the KSA where he chaired the English department. He also worked at Sadat Academy in Egypt and became the Vice Dean of AL-Minya branch. Throughout his academic career, he almost taught all linguistic and skills courses. He has many publications in his area and participated in many international conferences and symposiums.

Email: kmohamed@kku.edu.sa

Irin Sultana, a Bangladeshi national, has been teaching as a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia since August 2012. She obtained her M.Phil. degree from Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. Ms. Sultana has above fifteen years of teaching experience in English Language and Literature. Previously, she worked as a lecturer in English at Gono Bishwabidyalay (Gono University), Bangladesh from 2006 to 2012. She has published a good number of research papers and a book titled "A Window to the Learners of English". Her field of interest includes critical and creative thinking approaches in ESL classrooms, language learning style preferences and a comparative study between the American dream and depression from a Marxist point of view.

Email: eren@kku.edu.sa, irin_eng2@hotmail.com

Acknowledgments

Not applicable

Authors contributions

1. Mr. Md. Faruquzzaman Akan authored this paper. As the primary contributor, he wrote, revised and edited the paper thoroughly. Mr. Akan is also the corresponding author.
2. Mr. Gaus Chowdhury worked on verifying most meanings and adding some vocabulary to the tables. He also proofread the paper.
3. Mr. A.K.M. Mazharul Islam played a good role in different parts of the paper, specially by adding some vocabulary and proofreading.
4. Ms. Anjum Mishu helped in editing the paper with valuable suggestions in major areas.
5. Mr. Md. Mostaq Ahamed assisted by paraphrasing and proofreading some parts of the paper.
6. Dr. Karem Abdellatif Ahmed Mohamed is the primary investigator and overall supervisor of the funded project.
7. Ms. Irin Sultana revised the paper and put forth some necessary comments.

All authors agreed to approve the final manuscript for publication.

Funding

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through a large Group Research Project under grant number RGP2/331/44.

Competing interests

Not applicable

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Akan, M. F. (2017). *A compendium of British English vs. American English* (1st ed.). Noor Publishing, Saarbrücken, Germany.
- Alan, A. M. (2000). *How we talk: American regional English today*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Algeo, J. (2014). *British-American lexical differences: A typology of interdialectal variation*. English across Cultures, Cultures across English.
- Baugh, A. C., & Cable, T. (1993). *A history of the English language*. Routledge (5th ed.).
- Benson, M., Evelyn, B., & Robert, F. I. (1986). *Lexicographic description of English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bin, Z., & Zhaofeng J. (2008). On grammatical differences between daily British and American English. *Asian Social Science*, 4(6), 69-74.
- Bodnar, J. (1985). *The transplanted. A history of immigrants in urban America*. Indiana University Press.
- Cambridge University Press. (2019). *Cambridge English dictionary* (4th ed.). UK.
- Carlo, G. S. D. (2013). *Lexical differences between American and British English: A survey study*, Università degli Studi di Napoli 'Federico II' (Italy).
- Collins. (2014). *Collins English dictionary* (12th ed.). Glasgow. UK.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Domínguez, C., Pedro J., & Nerlich, B. (2002). "False friends: Their origin and semantics in some selected languages". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 1833-1849.
- Graddol, D. (2007). *English Next*. British Council.
- Hansel, J. (2009). *How has immigration into the United States influenced the language?* Univerzitetna knjižnica Maribor.
- Hill, R. (1982). *A dictionary of false friends*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Houghton, M. H. (Ed). (2016). *American heritage dictionary of the English language*. (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Jarrahi, E. (2007). *The concept of melting pot as an American identity*. SparkNET.
- Leech, G. N. (2003). Modality on the move: The English modal auxiliaries 1961-1992. *Topics in English Linguistics*, 44, 223-240.
- Leonard, I., & Parment, R. (1971). *American nativism, 1830-1860*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- McArthur, T. (1981). *Longman lexicon of contemporary English*. Essex CM20 2JE, England.
- McDavid, R. I. (1980). *Varieties of American English: Essays (Language Science & National Development)*. Stamford University Press.
- Merriam-Webster. (2022). *The Merriam-Webster dictionary* (Revised ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.
- Millward, C. M. (1996). *A biography of the English language*. U.S.A: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Nation, P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford University Press. (2020). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of English* (10th ed.). UK.
- Pearson Longman. (2016). *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (6th ed.). UK.
- Rahim, M. A., & Akan, M. F. (2008). British and American English: A comparative study of the two varieties, *Journal of the Institute of Modern Languages*, V- 22, June, 2008-2009, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Rickford, J. R. (2002). "How linguists approach the study of language and dialect". Ling 73, AAVE, Stanford.
- Sanyal, D. (2013). A comparative analysis of lexical variation in American and British English with special reference to a few selected words. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(3), 177- 188.
- Trawick-Smith, B. (2011). "When did Americans stop "Talking British?"". Dialogue Blog.
- Turner, F. J. (1997). *The frontier in American history*. University of Virginia. USA.
- Webster, N. (1806). *A compendious dictionary of the English language*, Sydney's Press. USA.
- Webster, N. (2020). *Webster's New World college dictionary* (5th ed.). Collins Reference.