

**British English and American English**  
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**Abstract**

This article is a brief study concerning the two variables of the English language ; British and American. Those two variables are considered as two dialects of English . The study discusses the differences between those two dialects from a grammatical point of view. In other words it deals with the grammatical structures of those two dialects and gives examples of the different structures. The study also refers to the backgrounds and the causes which led to those differences .

**ملخص البحث**

تخص الدراسة اللهجتين العائدة للغة الانكليزية وهي اللهجة الانكليزية والامريكية والاختلافات التي تعود للتركيبات القواعدية بين هاتين اللهجتين . تناقش الدراسة هذه الاختلافات واسبابها وتعطي الدراسة ايضا امثلة لهذه الاختلافات وتشير الدراسة الى الاسباب التي ادت الى هذه الاختلافات بمرور الزمن .

**Introduction : -**

A language is defined as a "collection of dialects" .  
Those dialects are spoken by members of different communities sharing the main structural features of the language, but different in some aspects of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. A dialect, then, is considered as a variety of one language spoken by the members of a single homogeneous speech-community. Dialects which are spoken in speech-communities occupying different parts of the general territory of a language are called regional dialects. The term dialectology is used as synonym of linguistic geography. It is a branch of linguistics which deals with the study of social, as well as regional, dialects. A language, therefore is often influenced by its speakers and consequently, may have changes in its systematic levels i.e. phonological, morphological and grammatical level as well.

\* Francis, N. W ., The structure of American English , 1958. P.48

### **British English and American English**

English is spoken in areas all over the World. It is originally spoken in Britain, but it is also the native language of people of originally different Linguistic geography I . e . they have different cultures because of their different origins and who adopt English as their native language. It is natural, therefore have their influence on the language they adopt. English is the language of a huge continent ( America ) which is inhabited by originally different people. English then has several dialects, but the most obvious of all those dialects are the two variables that English language exhibits by time. In other words the main variables of English language are ; British English and American English . These two variations tend to go far beyond the level of pronunciation and vocabulary, but in spelling and grammar, as well.

And because of the large number of inhabitants in America (North America) British English has been much influenced by American speakers. In this article I shall deal with the grammatical aspects of the English language .

The following is just some of many different structures <sup>1</sup> of the two variables. However, both are understood by Americans as well as British .

#### **1-Tenses: simple past and present perfect :**

British people often use the present perfect tense when they want to inform somebody or to give news as in the following examples :

- Have you heard the latest ?
- I didn't finish my Work yet.

#### **2-The use of the articles :**

The definite article "the" is not used, in British English, in the titles of the principal public buildings and organizations e.g. Oxford University .  
Bristol Zoo

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<sup>1</sup>) By structures I mean, grammatical structures i.e. the organizing of morphemes and words into larger meaningful utterances .

**Manchester City Council**

In American English “the” is more often used, in British English, before names of some illnesses as they are treated as uncountable. American usage is different in some cases as in the following examples :

I am getting toothache ( British )

I am getting a toothache ( American )

**3-Mid-position adverb :**

Mid-position adverbs are often placed before auxiliary verbs, in American English, even if the verb is not emphasized. In British English, these adverbs are usually placed after the auxiliaries, except in the case of emphasis. The following scheme shows the different structures :

**British English**

Subject	Aux.	Adverb	Complement
She	is	probably	In the office

**American English L Emphatic British English**

Subject	Adverb	Aux	Complement
She	probably	is	In her office

**4-Must, have to, have got to :**

In British English “must” can be used to ask about what is necessary. In American English, “have to” is generally preferable as in the following examples :

Must he study French this Year ? (British )

Does he have to study French this Year ? ( American )

“ Have to “ is used, in American English, to give permission not to do things, instead of “ need not “ in British English as in the following examples :

You don t have to work, if you feel tired. ( British )

You needn t work, if you feel tired. ( American )

“have got + infinitive”, is used to express obligation as in :

I ve got to leave now, I ve got some work to do.

It is also used to express certainty like “must” This is used in American English, but now it is becoming common in British English as in the following examples :

You've got to be kidding. (American)

You must be kidding. (British)

#### 5- The modals “should” and “would”

The modals “should” and “would” can be used as in the following :

I	Would	Should
You	Would	
She	Would	
He	Would	
It	Would	
They	Would	
We	Would	Should

In British English “should” and “would” can be used with the same meaning, with “I” and “we” as shown in the table. In American English, “should” is rarely used and it is becoming less common in British English.

#### 6- The use of “in” and “on” :

The preposition “in” is used to indicate a position large areas or in three-dimensional space as in the following examples :

He is in his office now.

She lived in Spain for Years.

In British English, “in” can be replaced by “at” in some cases as in the following example:

They are in church.

Or,

They are at church. (with no difference in meaning).

But British people usually say:

He at college

At school

At home

At work

In American English, "in" is usually used as in :

In school

In college

The American also use "in" instead of "for" in the following situation:

I haven t seen her in Years. (instead of the British English)

I haven t seen her for Years.

B-The preposition "on" is usually in American English in asentence like:

I will see you Sunday morning. (for the British English)

I will see you on Sunday morning.

#### **7-The determiner "both (of)"**

The determiner "both of" is usual in American English as in the following examples:

She has typed both of the reports.

Both of these books are in economy.

In British English, "the" or a "possessive" are dropped after both as in the following examles:

He lost both parents in a car accident.

She has typed both reports.

#### **8-The verbs "like" and "drown"**

A-The verb "like" + ing. is used to talk about enjoyment and "like"+ infinitive, is used to talk about choices and habits as in the following examples:

She likes travelling abroad. (enjoyment).

She likes to read fiction stories. (chice)

In American English, the structure "like"+infinitive is used in both senses as in the following examples:

He likes to listen to jazz. (enjoyment)

He likes to drink coffee with breakfast.(choice)

B-The verb "drwn" can be used both active and passive forms to talk about accidental drowning as in the following example:

He (was) drowned while swimming in the lake last week.

In American English, only active form is used to talk about accidental drowning as in the following example:

He drowned while swimming in the lake.(As compared with):

Everyone believes he was drowned by his friend.

What have been mentioned above are just few of many examples concerning grammatical changes in English language.

These changes are considered as dialect differences of the same language, and that is due to the geographical and social distribution of the speakers of the language. It is a result of the different cultures because of the immigration of foregnlanguagge groupe in America. And bcause of the great number of the American inhabitants, the American English is more influential than that of British.

#### **Bibliography**

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