

**FEDRAL UNIVERSITY WUKARI, TARABA STATE**

**FACULTY OF LAW**

**COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**COURSE CODE: ENG 101**

**GROUP ASSIGNMENT**

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**GROUP FIVE (5)**

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**QUESTION**

Discuss on the following varieties of English with emphasis on the grammar, vocabulary, lexicon and pronunciation

British English

American English

Australian English

Nigerian English

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# INTRODUCTION

English is not only known as the language of the English people, but also as the language spoken by people in many countries. English began in what is now the British-Isles. At the beginning of the fifth century, Britain was invaded by three tribes from Northern Europe: the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. These three tribes settled down on the island and merged into one people. The three dialects they spoke naturally grew into a single language, the English language.

English is classified as a Germanic language. It is one of the languages related to German, Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish. Its history goes back to the year 450, when the old English is marked. The history of the English language is generally divided into three periods: Old English (450-1150), Middle English (1150-1500) and Modern English (1500-present) (Qin, 1983). The English language began with very small population. However, after years of development, now it is probably one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

With the development of the English language, it has many varieties in different parts of the world. Different varieties differ in accent, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, sociolinguistics, and have its respective characteristics in pronunciation, tone, intonation, spelling and so on. Therefore, it is important for English language learners to observe the differences in language use.

## 2. English and Englishes

### 2.1 The Development of English into Englishes

English has changed in many ways. American English is one example. Early in the seventeenth century, some colonists landed in America, taking with them the Elizabethan English, the language used by Shakespeare and Milton. As time went on, the English language gradually changed on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Americans adopted many words from foreign languages and invented large numbers of new words to meet various needs. That is to say, English has developed a character of its own, reflecting the life and the physical and social movement of the American people. Just as Noah Webster (1789), the famous American lexicographer and author, wrote in his *Dissertations on the English Language*, "The reasons for American English being different from British English are simple: As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as in government. Great Britain, whose children we are, and whose language we speak, should no longer be our standard..."

Because of the spreading of English to the world, there are changes that have occurred as a result of individuals who have come from different areas in England, who have moved around the world and taken with them their regional characteristics. Noticeably, there are South African English, New Zealand English, Australian English, Canadian English and the most commonly used British English and American English.

### 2.2 What are British English and American English?

Before the discussion of the two major varieties--British English and American English, it is important to get a clear understanding of what British English and American English are. It has already been pointed out that no two persons speak alike, and within the area of all but the smallest speech communities (groups of people speaking the same language) there are subdivisions of recognizably different types of language, called dialects, which do not, however, render intercommunication impossible or markedly difficult.

Therefore, in a narrow sense, British English is the English spoken by the great majority of educated people in South and Southeast England, especially in London and its vicinity. American English is General American English that spoken by the great majority of the American people. In a broad sense, British English and American English refer to the two representative varieties of English language used by countries and regions as their native language, second language or one of the foreign languages.

From this sense, the discussion and research about British English and American English will help language learners better understand not only the English language used by Britain and the United States, but also the English used world-wide.

### 3. Characteristics of British English and American English

Because both British English and American English are just two varieties of the English language with their separate development according to historical, political and social changes, therefore, it is evident that there is no superiority or inferiority as regards British English and American English.

However, as a language learner, it is very important to observe the characteristics and differences in language use. That is the key to learn a language well. From three main aspects (phonetics, vocabulary and grammar), the following presents a brief comparison of the two most widely used varieties of English language.

#### *3.1 Differences in Phonetics*

##### 3.1.1 RP and GA

In different period of English language development, the pronunciation varies. And even in one period, the pronunciation also varies in different regions of a country.

For example, the traditional way is to clarify American English into three types: Eastern American, Southern American and General American. Here, according to some linguists, the pronunciation of American English and British English refers to the General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP).

##### 3.1.2 Differences in Individual Sounds

Firstly, the most marked difference between GA and RP lies in the pronunciation of the vowels of *dance*, *fast* and *glass*. Americans pronounce these words with a sound /æ/ as in cat. In contrast, British people will pronounce these words as /dɑ:ns/, /fɑ:st/ and /glɑ:s/.

Secondly, another noticeable difference can be found in the pronunciation of words like *for*, *door* and *car*. In America, these words are pronounced with *r* sound as a fricative, whereas in England it is silent except in expressions like *far away* and *the door opens* when a linking *r* is naturally inserted.

Thirdly, Americans pronounce words like *dock*, *fog* and *hot* with a low backsound /ɑ/ like the vowel sound in *car* and *father* shortened. On the contrary, British people will pronounce it as /ɒ/ sound.

Fourthly, in American English, words like *dew*, *duke* and *new* with the /ju:/ sound reduced to /u:/.

Finally, in American English, people traditionally speak out every syllable. However, in British English, people tend to omit some of the syllables. One case is that words ending with *-ary* or *-ory* in

American English are pronounced as four-syllabled words, whereas in British English are pronounced as three-syllabled words.

### 3.2 Differences in Vocabulary

#### 3.2.1 Differences in Spelling

Firstly, words ending with *-er* in American English have the ending as *-re* in British English. For example, in British English, *theatre*, *centre*, *metre*, *fibre*, *litre* are spelled as *theater*, *center*, *meter*, *fiber*, *liter* in American English (Some of the examples are taken from Lin, 1987).

Secondly, words ending with *-or* in American English as *-our* in British English. For example, in British English, *colour*, *labour*, *honour*, *humour*, *favour* are spelled as *color*, *labor*, *honor*, *humor*, *favor* in American English.

Thirdly, words having one consonant in American English whereas have two in British English. For example, in British English, *traveller*, *waggon*, *jeweller*, *dialled* are spelled as *traveler*, *wagon*, *jeweler*, *dialed* in American English.

Besides what is discussed above, there are other differences in spelling. For example, in British English, *axe*, *cheque*, *draught*, *grey*, *plough*, *tyre* are spelled as *ax*, *check*, *draft*, *gray*, *plow*, *tire* in American English.

From the discussion above, it is easy to draw the conclusion about one distinctive characteristic of the American English. That is to say, American English is more 'English' in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Modern English pronunciation and spelling systems. For example, in Modern English, the sound /ə/ represents what *-er* sounds as the ending letters in words like *center*, *meter*, *fiber*, etc. Whereas in British English, people would spell differently with the /ə/ sound. They will spell as *centre*, *metre*, *fibre* (Lin, 1987). There are more of these words:

	BrE	AmE
/f/	<i>dra<u>u</u>ght</i>	<i>dra<u>f</u>t</i>
/k/	<i>che<u>q</u>ue</i>	<i>che<u>c</u>k</i>

#### 3.2.2 The Same Meaning Using Different Word Items

Due to the differences in the population structure, physical environment, social and economic conditions, some of the vocabulary in American English rightly remain its meaning just as what the first settlers brought into the land. So these words still have the meaning as in the history of British English period. However, British English also develops in its course of history. For instance,

*Mad* for angry, mad is a survival of thirteenth century English. *Sick* for *ill*, sick appeared in the ninth century and was replaced by *ill* in the fifteenth century. Sidewalk for pavement, sidewalk is an old

word first coined in the eighteenth century. *Fall* for *autumn*. Fall is also a survival of the older British usage (Lin, 1987).

Therefore, conservation and innovation are two major features of American English. On the one hand, American English has preserved certain older features of the language, which have disappeared from British English. A number of survivals of British English mentioned above represent conservation of the American vocabulary. On the other hand, American English is characterized with the frontier spirit, ingenuity, vividness and casualness.

The followings are some common words indicating the same meaning

BrE	AmE
<i>lift</i>	<i>elevator</i>
<i>flat</i>	<i>apartment</i>
<i>sweets</i>	<i>candy</i>
<i>film</i>	<i>movie</i>

Stevens (1972) devised two contrasting word-lists in his book British and American English. These two word-lists contain several hundred common equivalents.

With the development of modern telecommunication technology, the world is becoming a global village. Thus the intercommunication between the United States and England makes a lot of those words listed above interchangeable. But as British English and American English have many sources of word formation, it is doubtless that the difference will remain so.

### 3.2.3 One Word Item Having Different Meanings

Many word items have different meaning for both British English and American English

	BrE	AmE
Billion	value in powers of ten $10^{12}$	$10^9$
Corn	wheat	maize

### 3.3 Differences in Grammar

Compared with phonetics and vocabulary, grammatical differences are generally few and trivial. It is not only because the grammar element is the most stable part in the language development, but also that the formation of the American English grammar was quite well developed as the seventeenth British English grammar. Therefore, only because American English has a character of creativeness, thus it results in some subtle differences in grammar between British English and American English. Non-native speakers should understand these small differences in order to use them correctly.

### 3.3.1 Differences in Verb Usage

British and American English use the phrase “Do you have ...” but with different meanings. In American English “Do you have ...” means “Do you possess at this moment of time?” However, in British English “Do you have ...” means “Do you habitually have?” For British English, it uses a different pattern to express the equivalent meaning as the American English. For instance,

*Do you have a dictionary? (AmE)*

*Have you a Dictionary? (BrE)*

In British English the verb *get* has its past participle *got*, while American English speakers use *gotten* as its past participle. For example:

*I wish I could have gotten here sooner. (AmE)*

*I wish I could have got here sooner. (BrE)*

Actually, there are more verbs in American English that have different past participles from British English. For instance,

Verb	past participle of BrE	p.p. of both BrE and AmE
<i>Burn</i>	<i>burnt</i>	<i>burned</i>
<i>Smell</i>	<i>smelt</i>	<i>smelled</i>

### 3.3.2 Differences in the Use of the Relative Clause Marker

In American English, people tend to use the word that, for example:

*I saw the man that arrived from Italy yesterday.*

*That* refers to the man who arrived from Italy yesterday. In varieties of British English, it's not unusual to find *that* replaced by *which*. For example:

*Please hand me the coffee cup, which is over to the left side of the table.*

Or: *Please hand me the coffee cup to the left side of the table.* (with no marker at all )

### 3.3.3 Differences in the Use of Preposition and Article

In American English, people generally do not use the preposition *on* before a day of the week or a specific date, while in British English people do use it. For example,

*She started her vocation Monday. (AmE)*

*She started her vocation on Monday. (BrE)*



There are also some other examples in American English where people omit some of the prepositions in some phrases. However, in British English, people do not. For example (some examples are taken from Lin, 1987),

*Is he home? (AmE)*

*Is he at home? (BrE)*

## ***LEXICAL DIFFERENCES***

When American and British people meet, the first obvious difference is their accent, the pronunciation of words. However, at a deeper and less apparent level, vocabulary differences give the right to treat the two varieties as two completely different languages. Sometimes, words are used in different ways to name the same thing, such as for the American 'railroad tie' and the British 'railway sweeper'. Sometimes, two different words are used but their meaning is quite obvious, such as for the American 'luggage' and the British 'baggage'. In other cases, some words that are common in one place are rare in the other, such as the words 'soppy' or 'row': although they are listed in American dictionaries, they are very uncommon in American speech but they are quite well known in the UK. Some words retained in Great Britain have been dropped by Americans, such as 'fortnight' and 'constable' and many no longer used in British are retained in American, such as 'mad' (in the sense of angry), 'fall', 'sick', etc.

Below are some differences between British and American English in terms of lexicon.

- House Vocabulary

As regards house terminology, there is a straightforward translation from a variety to the other for some terms, such as the American 'apartment house', 'condominium', 'duplex', and 'row house', which in British are respectively a 'block of flats', 'owner-occupied flat', 'semi-detached house', and 'terraced house'. In other cases, there may be no exact British equivalent for the American term, as for 'brownstone', used for a house made of red-brown stone, typical of nineteenth century cities in eastern US.

- Transport

Many differences between American and British English are related to transport vocabulary. Whereas in British people take a 'couch', Americans say they would take a 'bus'; Americans take 'subways', whereas in Great Britain this means of transport is called an 'underground'. Americans would go by train or 'railroad', which is the American equivalent of the British term 'railway'. 'Baggage car', 'café car', 'one-way ticket', 'round-trip ticket', 'railroad' are the American equivalents of 'baggage van', 'buffet car', 'single ticket', 'return ticket', and 'railway carriage' in British. Other vehicle differences are the American 'motorcycle', 'station wagon', and 'truck' against the British 'motorbike', 'estate (car)', and 'lorry'. Reminding that British people also drive on the opposite side to Americans, in the

UK, the term 'outside lane' refers to the higher speed passing lane closest to the centre of the road, while the term 'inside lane' refers to the lane closer to the edge. In American English these terms have the opposite meaning.

- Food

Recipes demonstrate how many differences in food and cooking terminology there are. For instance, a British 'biscuit' is an American 'cookie'.

Furthermore, American and British use the same words for most categories of meat as beef, pork, and lamb; the differences are for specific meat dishes.

- Numbers

Finally, the system of saying and writing numbers is a little different. The British insert 'and' before the tens and the units, as in 'two hundred and fifty'. Americans are more likely to read numbers like 1,456 as 'fourteen fifty-six' instead of 'one thousand, four hundred and fifty-six', unless they are referring to years.

## **AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH**

Considered one of the major variations of the English language, Australian English is the official language of Australia, having originally deviated from the British English in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the founding of the new colony of New South Wales.

- **Linguistic features of Australian English**

Generally speaking, Australian English takes features from both British and American English, so it is sometimes considered a combination of the two variations. However, it is important to understand that there are a number of unique features as well, including exclusive vocabulary.

### **Grammatical features**

Australian English reputation as an amalgam of British and American English can be better understood when you look at its grammatical features. For example, Australian English most closely resembles British English. The 'u' is retained in words like 'colour' and the 'ise' ending is used instead of the American 'ize' suffix on words like 'realise'/realize'.

Yet, there are plenty of exceptions to this. The word 'inquire' is often used instead of 'enquire', which resembles American English, while the word 'program' is used instead of the British English 'programme'. Furthermore even 'labour' is most common, Australian Labor party's name has an Americanised spelling instead.

Much like with British English, Australian English has irregular past tense and past participles of verbs like 'spell' and 'smell', so they become 'spelt' and 'smelt', respectively. However, like with American English, Australians are more likely to say 1,100 as eleven hundred rather than one thousand one hundred.

When dealing with collective nouns, Australian English has more in common with the American version of the language. For example, both Australians and Americans would say "the football team has scored a goal" whereas in British English there would say "the football team have scored a goal". Interestingly, the naming of rivers follows either American or British conventions depending on the part of the country you are.

For most of Australia, the American naming convention is used, so the word 'River' appears last, Hudson River. To give an Australian example, it would be the Darling River. Yet in southern Australia, the British naming system is used, with the 'River' appearing first. And the above will be called River Darling

## PRONUNCIATION IN AUSTRALIA

Australian English vs American English takes on a life on its own when it comes to pronunciation of words and this is why people with Australian English sound so distinctive. One of the most noticeable features is the different sound for the 'i' in sounds like 'night' and 'like'. Instead, it sounds like less pronounced 'oi', (e.g 'noight')

The soft 'a', which can be heard in words like 'cat' and 'hat', is usually pronounced similar to 'eh'. This means that the word 'cat' sounds like 'ceht'.

In most cases, the 'ing' ending is not pronounced in full, meaning words like 'singing', 'jumping' are pronounced 'singin' jumpin'. This is a trait that is sometimes seen in informal English in both the United States and great Britain as well, but it is more common in Australian English.

Finally, Australian English is said to be non-rhotic variation of the language, which means that the /r/ sound is not pronounced if it is after a vowel and not immediately followed by another vowel. For instance, the word 'card' is pronounced 'ca:d, with the /r/ sound being dropped. Meanwhile, the ending of words like 'better' and 'wetter' is lowered to sound similar to 'ah'. This means you would say 'bett-ah', and wett-ah' and so on.

## Australian English vocabulary

As far as everyday vocabulary is concerned, Australian English once again shares words and phrases with both British and American English, but also has some terminology on its own.

Perhaps the most obvious examples of Australian words which are now recognized in other variants of the language are 'outback' which is used to describe a remote location and 'barbie', used to

describe the word 'barbecue'. An example of an Australian only expression, meanwhile, would be 'doona', which is used instead of the word 'duvet'.

Like in British English, Australians say 'aluminium' rather than 'aluminum' and 'mobile phone' instead of 'cell phone'. Australians tend to use the words 'anti-clockwise' instead of Americans 'counter-clockwise' and petrol instead of the American 'gasoline'

## AUSTRALIAN SLANG WORDS

One distinctive feature of the Australian English is the slangs used. Below are some slangs and phrases used in Australian English:

1. Amber – Beer or lager
2. Aussie – An Australian person
3. Fair dinkum—True, or genuine
4. Gander – to look at something
5. G'day – literally mean 'good day' but is used as a general greeting
6. Hooroo – Goodbye
7. Oldies – parents

## THE NIGERIAN ENGLISH

### INTRODUCTION

Language according to Ngara (1982), is not only words and grammatical structures, the use of a language carries with it prejudices, habits and mannerisms. For now in Nigeria, we cannot say that any of the three major indigenous language as an official language or a means of effective communication because Nigeria is a multi-lingual state, hence the need for a generally accepted language of which through the colonization of Nigeria by Britain, English is now the lingua franca (official language) of Nigeria. It is note worthy that the Nigerian standard English is not pidgin, even though pidgin is generally spoken even among the elites. The fact the Nigerian English language is a standard language is disputable as there is a deviation in the construction of sentences amongst other differences, when comparing the Nigerian English language and other English languages such as the British and the American English. Thus, to buttress the existence of Nigerian English, Bamgbose (1982), tells the amusing story of an important personality who denied the existence of Nigerian English but when he was interrupted a few minutes later he used the Nigerian English expression; "*let me land*".

The above discussion clearly shows that even though the Nigerian English is not as standard as the British English, the Nigerian English is not a myth but a reality. It is part of the political and social history of the country.

The standard Nigerian English is a set of grammatical, phonological and lexical forms used by educated Nigerians either in speech or in writing

Below are some subtle differences between the standard Nigerian English and other standard variety of English.

## **At the Grammatical level**

### **Deviant use of verbs**

**Use of static verbs:** static verbs are verbs that denote perception such as see, look, hear, notice; verbs of cognition such as know, understand, forget, remember, remind etc and verbs of relations such as belong, are, is, am, equal, resemble, have etc. These verbs do not normally occur in the progressive aspect. Below are some examples:

- I am seeing from the second floor. (can see)
- Nobody hears English better than I do. (understand)

**Use of dynamic verbs:** Dynamic verbs are verbs that denote activity. In other words, there are verbs that express physical actions. They do occur in progressive aspect. There are also known as non-linking verbs. below are some example of deviant verbs used by Nigerians.

- NEPA has brought light.

NEPA has brought electricity supply.

- Please, put on/off the light.

(switch on/off)

### **Deviant use of reflective pronouns**

In Nigerian languages, the distinctions between “themselves”, “ourselves”, “each other”, and one another are not made. Below are some examples:

- Olu and Sade love *themselves*. (each other)
- After greeting *ourselves*, John, peter, peter and I played tennis. (one another)

### **Redundant pluralization of some Nouns**

- The *equipments* in the science laboratory are outdated. (equipment)
- The *informations* heard about Mr. Bello are not believable. (information)

### Redundant use of adjectives, time, manner adjuncts as premodifiers

- Janet always likes wearing small small blouses. (jumper)
- I will be there now now

(that is right now/immediately)

### Redundant use of amplifiers – very as in:

- The use of computers in banks is very very important.
- Science and technology is very very important for national development in Nigeria

### Code mixing

Code mixing is a means of communication which involves a speaker mixing two languages within the elements of a sentence structure (in this case, English and Yoruba). Below are some examples of code mixing

- I travelled to my *abule* (village) for Christmas in December last year.
- My *egbon* (elder brother or sister) has been admitted to study Botany at the university of Ibadan.

### At the lexical level. (lexicon)

The errors identified are traceable to the cultural background of the learners as well as their linguistic background. The lexical errors identified are categorized under the following headlines:

1. **Semantic Extension:** Lexical items identified under this heading have equivalence in the Native English but have an extensive meaning in Nigerian English. Here are some extracts:

- *Mummy* said we should come to church on Saturday for preparatory class.

The above mummy refers to the speaker's pastor's wife whereas in the native English the word 'mummy's is a child's word for a mother.

- Uncle John taught me mathematics in primary 5.

The above "Uncle John" refers to the speaker's mathematics teacher; this implies that in Nigerian English any male adult could be addressed as "uncle" or at times father whereas in the native English an uncle is the brother of a person's mother or father or the husband of one's aunt.

**2. Semantic Transfer:** Some items in Nigerian English are present in British English but the concepts they express in Nigerian English are not present in British English. Here are some examples:

- Where is the *gate man*?

Where is the *gate keeper*?

- Can you give me a *lift*?

Can you give me a *free ride*?

**3. Coinages (loan creation):** Certain items are peculiar to Nigerian English but denote Nigerian English but denote Nigerian Experian experiences which are also present in the native English: e.g.

- Mr. Dapo is a *419* man.

My Dapo is a *dubious* man.

- I saw many *known faces* at the party.

‘known faces’ in Nigerian English means ‘acquaintances’

## Pidgin English

Although Nigerians make use of the British English. Over the years, the Nigerian Pidgin English can be arguably said to be overtaking the Standard English in terms of usage and popularity, as virtually everyone in Nigeria speaks Pidgin English ranging from the poor to the rich. One of the reasons why the Nigerian Pidgin English was being used more than the Standard English is because of the high rate of illiteracy. Many Nigerians are uneducated and for one to be able to speak English fluently, one has to be educated to an extent, since English is a foreign language, so many people who cannot follow the rules for constructing a proper sentence deviate thereby leading to Pidgin English.

Below are some pidgin English sentences and their meaning in standard English.

- *comot here* (*get out*)
- *Where you tñe?* (*where are you*)?
- *Enter inside* (*come inside*)

## PRONUNCIATION

Nigeria is a multi lingual state. Therefore there is no standard way of pronouncing words, as pronunciation of words greatly depends on the part of the country where one comes from. But even at that, there are some words that majority of Nigerians pronounce alike which are different from the way native speakers of English pronounce them. Below are some examples

- Ass Na – Arsenal
- Ozzband – husband
- Save Johnny – safe journey
- Lukatit – look at it

## **CONCLUSION**

The above writing, is an attempt to elaborately discuss on various English languages spoken in different counties

Firstly, it is difficult to discuss the current state of anything without reference to its history. Therefore from the brief account of the historical development of the English language, it is clear to know that the British English, American English, Australian English and Nigerian English, although all of them are all Englishes have their differences and similarities.

Secondly, as a language learner, it is important to observe the differences in language use. That is the key to learn a language well. This also applies to the study of English. The most remarkable difference between British English and American English and other languages lies on vocabulary. Also there are some subtle differences in phonetics, grammar and other habitual usage.

Thirdly, from the differences discussed, it is important to notice that the American English is more 'English' in accordance with the pronunciation and spelling systems.

Also, as to the future development of British English and American English and all other Englishes is easy to draw the conclusion that there will be intercommunications which will make the differences mild and easily understood. However, some differences may disappear, the others will remain so.

Finally, the study of the different varieties of English will allow one have a better understanding of the various English languages and will also help one to be able to speak English more fluently, and also help us in the construction of sentences, so as to avoid misspelling of words and also mixing American English with British English.



## **ABSTACT**

English is clarified as a Germanic language, and it began in what is now the British-Isles. After years of development, English language has many varieties in different parts of the world. Different varieties differ in accent, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, sociolinguistics, and have its respective characteristics in pronunciation, tone, intonation, spelling and so on. Therefore, it is important for English language learners to observe the differences in language use. The present paper is an attempt to explore the regional characteristics of the two most commonly used varieties of the English Language—British English and American English as well as two other English languages which include, the Australian English and Nigerian English. It is concluded that there will be intercommunications which will make the regional differences mild and easily understood. However, some differences may disappear, the others will remain so and below are this present paper

