



Phonetics and Phonology

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Response Paper on Article

“British and American Phonetic Varieties”

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Response Paper

The article “*British and American Phonetic Varieties*” written by Naghmeh Mirzaie Hosseinzadeh, Aliyeh Kord Zafaranlu Kambuziya, and Mansour Shariati (Journal of Language Teaching and Research, May 2015) analyzes the two varieties of British and American English based on their phonetic differences.

Firstly, the authors have led a historical background stating that Colonization of British colonies in America resulted in introduction and development of English language in American region. The colonization and trade was followed by conflicts and war, which led to formation of two distinct varieties of English with significant phonetic and phonological differences.

American and British English have various spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical differences however; the chosen study discusses the variation in vowels and consonants. The authors have done a comparative analysis of Monophthongs, Diphthongs, and Consonants. Tabular evidences have been provided, containing set of two words, which have been transcribed on basis of IPA symbols.

I strongly agree with the claim of the study that British and American English have distinct phonetic variations. One of the initial, yet strong approaches is that the authors have explained the two distinct accents of English in Britain and America. For instance, RP (Received Pronunciation) in Britain and GA (General American English) in America are two standard accents spoken in both regions. Vowels have been phonetically compared in GA and RP. This fact proves the authors’ claim of phonetic variations in Britain and America.

Furthermore, the authors have supported their claim with a number of evidences, which adds to the strength of the claim. A comparative transcription table containing the IPA vowels

and IPA consonants in American and British English strongly suggests the phonological difference in both languages. However, in my opinion, more than two examples in each table should be provided to back the rigidness of the claim.

The study has also ignored the phonetic variations within British and American regions. As regional accents and geographical differences impart differences within one particular variety such as in British English, there is Yorkshire accent, Sheffield accent, Northern accent or Welsh accent. American English is also bound to have regional phonological variations such as Southern accent, New England accent, New York City accent, Texas accent, and Midwestern accent. These examples show that there is a variety of accentual or dialectal differences within America and Britain and this aspect however has been overlooked in this study.

The authors have put forth the claim that this comparative analysis of British and American phonetic variations will assist English learners in the recognition and correct usage of either of the intended variety. In my opinion, this claim is agreeable as the comparison drawn by researchers creates a boundary between the correct utterances and pronunciation of each variety. It will act as a source of information about both varieties of English.

I agree with the approach of researchers as they have also adopted descriptive analysis after the comparative analysis. This approach describes the comparison in deeper details, which strengthens the claims and evidences quoted by the authors. A significant strength of this text is the vast usage of articulatory phonetics for descriptive analysis of evidences. Manner, place, and voice for articulation have been described, in detail, separately in order to emphasize the claim.

In conclusion, the authors have achieved the intended purpose of research as the evidences and examples, provided to support the claim, were strong enough to back-up the idea. The set of

words for each section, along with their British and American transcriptions, have been discussed in detail. This makes it easier and more convincing for the readers to develop the intended idea. Overall, the text is important and well supported to understand and observe the variations between American and British English.

Reference

Hosseinzadeh, N. M., Kambuziya, A. K. Z., & Shariati, M. (2015). British and American Phonetic Varieties. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(3), 647.
<https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0603.23>