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British and American Phonetic Varieties

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Abstract—The aim of this research is to analyze the two varieties of British and American English in respect of their phonetic differences. Although the language of Britain and America is English, there are some pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammatical, idiomatic and other differences between them. In this research, the phonetic differences between these two English varieties have been analyzed in terms of their vowels (including monophthongs and diphthongs) and consonants. The method used in this research is comparative whose data have been collected through library and internet sources. Comparative method is a linguistic method used to compare and contrast two or more languages. The obtained results, based on the comparison between British and American pronunciation, will get English language learners to the recognition, conscious knowledge and correct usage of British and American English.

Index Terms— British & American English, vowel, diphthong, consonant, accent, phonetics

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 17th century, with the British arrival and the establishment of its colonization in America, American people started speaking English. The colonization was followed by trade and by the establishment of colonies of settlers. It was in 18th that the relations between the British and Americans broke up because of trade and conflict which led to war. The war caused the differences and interactions between them which fell into three phases: First, American English was colonial in status and British English was dominant. During this phase, the influence and the flow of development was from British to American English. In the second phase, from independence until the First World War, American English established for itself a character of its own, including a reputation for creating new expressions, being racy and original, while still being regarded itself as a junior partner beside British English. Thirdly, which continues at the present time, American English emerges as of equal status and values as that of British English and in some respects reversing the earlier flow of influence, so that it is frequently British English which draws on American English.(as cited in Qiu, 2010-12, pp.6-21) Concerning the divergence between these two English varieties George Bernard Shaw said: “the united states and united kingdom are two countries divided by a common language”.(as cited in Patta, 2007, p.81). The divergence between these two English varieties has brought differences in their pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, idioms and so on. But, the differences in terms of vocabulary, grammar, or spelling are small compared with phonetic differences. In this article, some of the vocalic and consonantal differences between these two English varieties will be evaluated.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Snezhina Dimitrova explains about the accents of General American English and Received Pronunciation of Britain as well as the differences of some British and American English vowels, consonants and stress and gives some examples. (2010, pp. 3-8).

Thomas Pyles and John Alegeo explored the principle differences between two major national dialects: British and American. Two of the main differences between them are pronunciation and spelling. In their work, they investigate some of such differences. (1993, pp. 212-236).

Laurie Bauer analyzes the vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation differences between British and American English. Moreover, his book is about the characteristics of English language as it is used in various countries including Britain and America. As to pronunciation, he discusses about these two accents: RP (received pronunciation) and GA (general American). (2002, p. 69).

Wells provides a classification of pronunciation differences between English varieties which holds just as well for colonial varieties as it does for local accents. Varieties, he says, have different pronunciations because of four factors: (as cited in Wells, 1982, p. 76).

- phonetic realization
- Phonotactic distribution

Phonemic systems

Lexical distribution

Paco Gomez uses IPA symbols to describe sounds. He chooses IPA symbols because they are a standard in sound description and ensure accuracy. Concerning the main differences between British and American English, he summarizes them as follows: (2009, pp. 3- 8).

The presence of rhotic accent

Differences in vowel pronunciation

Differences in consonant pronunciation

Differences in articulation

Change of stress

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Accent refers to pronunciation only and identifies where a person is from regionally or socially. Regional accents can refer to any locale, including both rural and urban communities within a country as well as national groups speaking the same language and our impression of other languages. Social accents relate to the cultural and educational background of the speaker. In Britain, the best example is RP (Received Pronunciation) which is the standard accent of standard English in England. Or, GA (known as General American English) is the standard accent of American English. (Crystal, 2003, p. 3).

Phonetics is a branch of linguistics that comprises the study of the sounds of human speech. It is concerned with the physical properties of speech sounds or signs, their physiological production, acoustic properties, auditory perception, and neurophysiological status. Phonology, on the other hand, is concerned with the abstract, grammatical characterization of systems of sounds or signs. The field of phonetics is a multilayered subject of linguistics that focuses on speech. In the case of oral languages, there are three basic areas of study: (as cited in O'Grady, 2005, p.15)

- Articulatory phonetics: the study of the production of speech sounds by the articulatory and vocal tract by the speaker.

- Acoustic phonetics: the study of the physical transmission of speech sounds from the speaker to the listener.

- Auditory phonetics: the study of the reception and perception of speech sounds by the listener. (as cited in O'Grady, 2005, p.15).

Henry Sweet, a great linguist, described phonetics as: "the indispensable foundation of all study of language-whether that study be purely theoretical or practical as well". (as cited in Sweet, 1877, p. 5).

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this research is the comparison between British and American English phonetic differences along with their phonological representations. In this article, IPA symbols are used to compare and describe British and American English varieties including: vowels, (comprising monophthongs and diphthongs) and consonants. Within each table, base words, with their British and American transcriptions, are illustrated and analyzed.

V. METHODOLOGY

This article aims at analyzing the phonetic system of British and American English and comparing them with each other. In view of the applied method, the researcher has made use of a wide range of library and internet sources. Concerning the approach used, British and American vocalic and consonantal varieties have been compared and analyzed through some examples.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting information and necessary data about phonetic varieties of vowels and consonants concerning British and American English, the researcher has applied the comparative, descriptive method between them. In each table, a set of two words has been used whose phonetic rules have been transcribed and analyzed based on IPA symbols. IPA (1999/2005) is the major as well as the oldest representative organization for phoneticians which was established in 1886 in Paris. The aim of IPA is to promote the scientific study of phonetics and the various practical applications of that science. IPA symbols are a standard in sound description and ensure accuracy. In furtherance of this aim, IPA provides the academic community world-wide with a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages. The phonetic rule of each set has been elaborated. (As cited in International Phonetic Association, 1999/2005).

VII. VOWELS

Vowels are distinguished from consonants primarily by a less radical degree of constriction imposed by the lips and tongue on the flow of air through the mouth. Distinctions within the class of vowels are created by the specific shape of

the lips and the precise positioning of the tongue body. It is traditional to describe these tongue positions by reference to a neutral point such as that corresponding roughly to the location the tongue body occupies in producing the vowel in the English word *bed*. (as cited in Kenstowicz, 1994, p.17). Vowels, or more precisely, the mouth shapes for vowels are specified in terms of three variables: vertical tongue-position (high-low), horizontal tongue-position (front-back), and lip-position (unrounded-rounded). (Cateford, 2003, p.120). This was the recommendation of the great English phonetician Henry Sweet, over a century ago: “The first and indispensable qualification of the phonetician is a thorough practical knowledge of the formation of the vowels. Those who try to learn new sounds by ear alone, without any systematic training in the use of their vocal organs, generally succeed only partially” (as cited in Sweet, 1877, p.21).

A. IPA Vowels

British English	American English
/ɒ/	/ɑ:/
/ɑ:/	/æ/
/ɔ:/	/ɑ:/
/ju:/	/u:/
/ɑ:/	/æ/
/ə/	/ɑ:/

B. British and American Phonetic Varieties of Vowels

There are some phonetic varieties between “standard” British and American vowels. Some of them having been investigated in this article include: British /ɒ/ vs. American /ɑ:/, British /ɑ:/ vs. American /æ/, British /ɔ:/ vs. American /ɑ:/, British /ju:/ vs. American /u:/, British /ɑ:/ vs. American nasalized vowel /æ̃/, British /ə/ vs. American /ɑ:/.

TABLEAU 1

Base word	British English	American English
Box	/bɒks/	[bɑ:ks]
Honest	/ˈɒnɪst/	[ˈɑ:nəst]

American vowels differ in length, but these differences depend primarily on the environment in which the respective vowels occur. The back rounded vowel /ɒ/ is heard in British English, or received pronunciation (RP) in words such as: *not*, *hot*, *block*, etc. In American or General American English (GA), this vowel sound is replaced with /ɑ:/, the back unrounded vowel. (as cited in Dimitrova, 2010, p.3). In pronunciation of /ɒ/, the back of the tongue is just below the half-open position, no contact being made between the tongue and the upper molars; the jaws are wide open and there is slight, open lip-rounding; and the tongue tip is behind the lower teeth. /ɒ/ does not occur word-finally or in stressed open syllables. Concerning the pronunciation of /ɑ:/, a part of the tongue between the center and the back is in the fully open position, no contact being made between the rims of the tongue and the upper molars; the jaws are considerably separated and the lips are neutrally open; the tongue tip is behind the lower teeth. /ɑ:/ does not normally occur before /ŋ/. (as cited in Gimson, 1980, p.2).

TABLEAU 2

Base word	British English	American English
class	/kla:s/	[klæs]
ask	/ɑ:sk/	[æsk]

In British English /ɑ/ is pronounced as /ɑ:/ whereas it is pronounced as /æ/ in American English. Vowel /æ/ becomes /ɑ:/ in British English when:

- Vowel /æ/ is before sounds /s/, /f/, and /t/, as in *pass*, *calf*, and *path*.
- Vowel /æ/ is followed by another consonant, especially in the cases such as /ns/, /nt/, /f/, in *dance*, *can't*, *ransh*.
- Words pronounced with [æs] in GA but with [ɑ:s] in RP: *brass*, *class*, *glass*.
- Words pronounced with [æf] in GA but with [ɑ:t] in RP: *graph*, *giraffe*, *half*.
- Words pronounced with [ænt] in GA but with [ɑ:nt] in RP: *aunt*, *plant*, *can't*.

Exceptions: *ant*, *banter*, *scant*, *mantle*.

- Words pronounced with [æmp] in GA but with [ɑ:mp] in RP: *sample*, *example*, *ample*.
- Words pronounced with [æθ] in GA but with [ɑ:θ] in RP: *bath*, *lath*, *path*. (as cited in Gomez, 2009, p.8)

Phonetically, /æ/ represents a fully low front unrounded vowel about half way between half-open /ɛ/ and open /ɑ/.

TABLEAU 3

Base word	British English	American English
thought	/θɔ:t/	[θɑ:t]
author	/ɔ:θə/	[ʼɑ:θə]

Mid back rounded vowel /ɔ:/ which in British English occurs in words such as thought, walk, law is usually opener and less rounded in American English. In fact, the General American vowels in the open back area are characterized by a considerable amount of variation. Some Americans pronounce the above words with a vowel quality which is lower than the British English vowel, but is still characterized by a certain amount of lip-rounding. Some dictionaries use the symbol /ɒ:/ to transcribe this American English vowel. But most words belonging to this large group have an alternative pronunciation in General American, one in which the vowel has lost its roundedness, thus becoming /ɑ:/. (as cited in Dimitrova, 2010, p. 5).

TABLEAU 4

Base word	British English	American English
produce	/prə'dju:s/	[prə'du:s]
student	/stju:dənt/	[stɪu:dənt]

Another phonetic variation between British and American English is related to the pronunciation of [ju:] in British English and [u:] in American English. American /j/ dropping occurs:

- After /s/ and /z/, as in assume [ə'su:m].
- After /l/, as in pollute [pə'lɪt].
- After /t/, /d/, and /n/, as in tune [tu:n]. (Gomez, 2009, p.8).

/j/ is an articulation in which one articulator is close to another, but without the vocal tract being narrowed to such an extent that a turbulent airstream is produced. The pronunciation of this central approximant slightly depends on the articulation of the following vowel. In British English, before /u/ and /ew/, /j/ is produced, whereas in American English /u:/ is produced. (as cited in Ladefoged, 2006, p.15).

TABLEAU 5

Base word	British English	American English
Can't	/kɑ:nt/	[kæ̃(n)t]
Dance	/dɑ:ns/	[dæ̃(n)s]

Vowels are often nasalized in American English; that is to say, air comes out through the nose and mouth at the same time. Vowels are not nasalized in most British pronunciations, so this makes the two accents sound very different. In some American dialects the /n/ is deleted so that the nasalization in the vowel is the only feature distinguishing can't from cat. If the soft palate is lowered while a vowel is being produced, nasalized vowels, being the second articulation, are generated. Nasalized vowels are transcribed with [̃], above the symbol. English has no distinct nasal vowels, but nasalization is often heard on English vowels. The term nasal vowel, on the other hand, suggests that the nasality is an essential identifying feature of the sound (as cited in Crystal, 2003, p. 308).

TABLEAU 6

Base word	British English	American English
pentagon	/ˈpentəɡən/	[ˈpentəɡɑ:n]
phenomenon	/fəˈnɒmɪnən/	[fəˈnɑmənɑ:n]

Concerning tableau 6, /ə/ being a mid-central vowel, occurs in grammatical function words and also at the end of some English words. The symbol shown designates a reduced quality (as cited in Ladefoged, 2006, p.94). In non-final word positions, the center of the tongue is raised between the half-open and half close positions; in the vicinity of the velar consonants /k, g/ and /n/ the tongue may be slightly more raised and retracted; in word-final positions, the tongue is in the half-open central position or in the most open region of the central area. The tongue tip is behind the lower teeth. The lips have a neutral position (i.e. are unrounded). This sound has very high frequency of occurrence in unaccented vowels. It is considered the neutral English vowel (as cited in Gimson, 1980, p.2). In the above examples, in British English /ə/ and in American pronunciation /ɑ:/ is used which is a low back unrounded vowel; often written /a/. In pronunciation of /a/, a part of the tongue between the center and the back is in the fully open position, no contact being made between the rims of the tongue and the upper molars; the jaws are considerably separated and the lips are neutrally open; the tongue tip is behind the lower teeth. (as cited in Gimson, 1980, p.2).

VIII. DIPHTHONG

Diphthongs are described as sequences of two vowels pronounced together, the two vocalic elements being members of the same syllable. According to the position of the more prominent element in the diphthong, diphthongs are divided into falling diphthongs, if the prominent element comes first, and rising diphthongs, if the less prominent element comes first. All English diphthongs belong to the first category. Diphthongs can also be opening diphthongs if the

degree of aperture increases with the glide or closing diphthongs if the less prominent vowel is closer than the first. There are wide diphthongs, those in which the glide implies a more radical movement of the speech organs (e.g. /aɪ/) and narrow diphthongs, if the two vocalic elements occupy neighboring positions (e.g. /eɪ/) on the vowel chart. There are also centering diphthongs, if the glide is from a marginal vowel in the vowel chart, either back or front, to a central vowel. In terms of length, diphthongs are similar to the long vowels. The most important thing about all the diphthongs is that the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part. As the glide to the second part happens, the loudness of the sound decreases. (as cited in Roach, 2009, p.17).

A. IPA Diphthongs

British English	American English
/ɪə/	/ɪr/
/əʊ/	/oʊ/
/ɑ:/	/eɪ/
/eɪ/	/æ/
/ɪ/	/aɪ/

B. British and American Phonetic Varieties of Diphthongs

In this part, five sets of diphthongal varieties between British and American English has been investigated including: British /ɪə/ vs. American /ɪr/, British /əʊ/ vs. American /oʊ/, British /ɑ:/ vs. American /eɪ/, British /eɪ/ vs. American /æ/, British /ɪ/ vs. American /aɪ/.

TABLEAU 7

Base word	British English	American English
near	/nɪə/	[nɪr]
weird	/wɪəd/	[wɪrd]

British English has 3 diphthongs ending in /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/. American English, on the other hand, has no separate phonemic diphthongs ending in /ə/. In British examples, the centering diphthong glides towards the /ə/ (Roach, 2009, p.18). /ɪə/ is a centring, falling, narrow, opening diphthong that starts at about the position of the short, lax /ɪ/ and glides towards schwa. This diphthong is distributed in all three basic positions: ear, deer, and tier. (as cited in Jones, 1987)

TABLEAU 8

Base word	British English	American English
go	/gəʊ/	[goʊ]
home	/həʊm/	[hoʊm]

As to tableau 8, in British English, the schwa /ə/ glides towards /ʊ/, so that the tongue moves closer to the roof of the mouth. This movement is not large because the second part of the diphthong is weak. The lips may be slightly rounded in anticipation of the glide towards /ʊ/, for which there is a noticeable lip-rounding. (Roach, 2009, p.18). In American pronunciation, this diphthong starts as a somewhat rounded vowel, between /ɔ/ and /o/, but centralized and gliding towards /ʊ/. In British English, this diphthong starts with the unrounded and central type /əʊ/. In some varieties of American English, and in the English of Scotland and northern England, it may be realized as a monophthong /o:/. (Cateford, 2003, p. 201).

TABLEAU 9

Base word	British English	American English
tomato	/tə'mɑ:təʊ/	[tə'mertou]
vase	/vɑ:z/	[veɪz]

In such words as the above, /ɑ/ is pronounced as /ɑ:/, a low back unrounded vowel, often written /a/, whereas in American pronunciation as the diphthong /eɪ/. /eɪ/ is a falling, narrow, closing diphthong. It starts with a front, mid vowel, between cardinal vowels /e/ and /ɛ/ and glides to a higher vowel value, closing. Often the second element is very short, sometimes even dropped, the diphthong being reduced to a long vowel monophthong /ɛ:/. (as cited in Jones, 1987)

TABLEAU 10

Base word	British English	American English
apricot	/eɪprɪ,kɒt/	[ˈæprɪ,kɑ:t]
comrade	/ˈkɒmreɪd/	[ˈkɑ:mræd]

/æ/ is the lowest front vowel of English. It is a short, lax, unrounded vowel, a little higher than the cardinal vowel /a/. It is a very common vowel in English and, contrary to the perception of many foreign learners of English, it is a short, not a long vowel. In some words as the above, /a/ is pronounced /eɪ/ by the British and /æ/ by the Americans.

TABLEAU 11

Base word	British English	American English
idyll	/ɪdl/	[ˈaɪdl]
advertisement	/ədˈvɜ:tɪsmənt/	[.ædvərˈtaɪzmənt]

In tableau 11, the difference between British and American English is concerned with the pronunciation of /i/ or /y/. In British English, it is pronounced with /ɪ/, but in American English with the diphthong /aɪ/. In pronunciation of short /ɪ/, a part of the tongue nearer to center than to front is raised just above the half-close position; the lips are loosely spread; the tongue is lax, with the side rims making a light contact with the upper molars; the tongue tip is behind the lower teeth. Its quality is that of a centralized cardinal vowel /e/. /ɪ/ may occur in all positions in the word. (as cited in Gimson, 1980, p. 2). /aɪ/ is a falling, wide, closing diphthong. It is the diphthong that actually implies the amplest articulatory movement of the speech organs that shift from the position of an open vowel, which is fairly central, to a front, close, lax vowel. This diphthong is distributed in all three basic positions: isle [aɪl], bite [baɪt], cry, [kraɪ]. (as cited in Jones, 1987).

IX. CONSONANTS

In articulatory phonetics, consonant is a speech sound that is articulated with complete or partial closure of the vocal tract. Examples include: /p/ pronounced with the lips, and /t/ pronounced with the front of the tongue. Each consonant can be distinguished by several features: (as cited in Maddieson, 1984, p. 2).

The place of the articulation, where in the vocal tract the obstruction of a consonant occurs.

The manner of the articulation, is how the air escapes from the vocal tract. It includes: stop, fricative, affricate.

The phonation of a consonant, is how the vocal cords vibrate during the articulation.

The voice onset time, which indicates the timing of the phonation.

The air stream mechanism, is how the air moving through the vocal tract is powered.

The length, is how long the obstruction of a consonant lasts.

A. IPA Consonants

British English	American English
/r/	/r/
/t/	/r/
/ʃ/	/ʒ/
/z/	/s/
/s/	/ʃ/
/ð/	/θ/

B. British and American Phonetic Varieties of Consonants

Concerning British and American consonants, there are some varieties between them including: British non-rhotic /r/ vs. American rhotic /r/, British /t/ vs. American flap /ɾ/ between two vowels, British /ʃ/ vs. American /ʒ/, British /z/ vs. American /s/, British /s/ vs. American /ʃ/, British /ð/ vs. American /θ/.

TABLEAU 12

Base word	British English	American English
Force	/fɔ:s/	[fɔ:rs]
Car	/kɑ:/	[kɑ:r]

The presence of the rhotic accent is one of the most noticeable differences between British and American English. Except for New York City and the area of Boston, American English is rhotic, British English is largely non-rhotic, save for Scotland and Ireland. In English, rhotic accent is produced as a retroflex approximant and refers to the manner letter /r/ is pronounced after a vowel within a syllable as in words such as hard, borne, or here. Sometimes, it is also called post-vocalic r or r-coloring. (as cited in Gomez, 2009, p. 3).

For the production of retroflex, first, the tongue approaches the gum and the tip is then curled back towards the roof of the mouth. This movement causes the tongue to be pulled back in the mouth. This accounts for the retroflexion part of the consonant. Furthermore, the tip of the tongue does not touch the gum at all, and thus no friction is caused. The vocal tract remains open throughout. This justifies the term approximant. Letter /r/ can also be pronounced in other two ways: (as cited in Gomez, 2009, p. 3)

•As the alveolar approximant [ɹ]. Sound [ɹ] appears at prevocalic positions in a syllable or syllable clusters, as in red [ɹed].

•As the alveolar flap [ɾ]. In American English, very often in colloquial registers, sound [ɹ] at intervocalic position with the stress on the first vowel is substituted by [ɾ], as in parish [pæɹɪʃ]. The alveolar flap [ɾ] only occurs in American English, while the alveolar approximant [ɹ] is found in both accents. (as cited in Gomez, 2009, p. 3).

TABLEAU 13

Base word	British English	American English
Atom	/ætəm/	[ˈæɹəm]
Writer	/ˈraɪtə/	[ˈraɪɹər]

One of the most typical features of American English concerns the realization of /t/ as [ɾ] between vowels, as shown in the above table. In this position, both in individual words and across word boundaries, /t/ is pronounced as a quick tap and is accompanied by voicing, so that it sounds almost like a /d/ called flap pronunciation. The symbol most frequently used in pronunciation dictionaries to show a voiced /t/ is [ɾ]. However, there is no t-voicing in *attend*, *return*, *attack*, etc., because the process of tapping and voicing the /t/ takes place in general American English (GA) only when the first of the two vowels is stressed. Neither is the /t/ voiced in *lightness* [ˈlaɪtnəs], *lighthouse* [ˈlaɪthaus]. In these words, /t/ is not immediately followed by a vowel. T-voicing also takes place when the stressed vowel is followed by /t/ or by /n/, e.g. party [pɑ:ɹɪ]. /t/ is also voiced when it is followed not by a vowel but by the syllabic lateral /l/, e.g., battle [bæɹl]. (as cited in Dimitrova, 2010, p. 8).

TABLEAU 14

Base word	British English	American English
Version	/ˈvɜ:ʃn/	[ˈvɜ:ɹʒn]
Asia	/ˈeɪʃə/	[ˈeɪɹə]

/ʃ/ is a voiceless post-alveolar fricative, and /ʒ/ is a voiced palate-alveolar fricative. For /ʃ/ and [ʒ], the tip of the tongue is close to the back part of the alveolar ridge forming a flat narrowing. The front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate forming the front secondary focus. The friction for /ʃ/ is strong, stronger than for /f/ and /θ/. For /ʃ/ the vocal cords do not vibrate; they vibrate for /ʒ/ when it occurs before vowels. (as cited in Yule, 2006, p. 11). Based on the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, like the above examples, in some words, /s/ is pronounced /ʃ/ in British English and /ʒ/ in American English.

TABLEAU 15

Base word	British English	American English
Blouse	/blaʊz/	[blaʊs]
Erase	/ɪˈreɪz/	[ɪˈreɪs]

/z/ is a voiced alveolar fricative and /s/ is a voiceless alveolar fricative. These sounds are produced with the tongue tip or blade and the alveolar ridge. In British English, in such words as the above, /s/ is pronounced /z/ and in American English /s/. Moreover, concerning the manners of their articulation, vowels before voiceless fricatives including /s/ are shorter than before voiced ones. Second, final voiceless fricatives are longer than final voiced ones. Third, the final fricatives classified as voiced are not actually voiced throughout the articulation unless the adjacent sounds are also voiced. Both of these types of articulation involve an obstruction of the airstream (Ladefoged, 2006, p. 65).

TABLEAU 16

Base word	British English	American English
cassia	/ˈkasiə/	[ˈkæʃə]
Cassius	/ˈkasiəs/	[ˈkæʃuhs]

Based on Longman and Oxford dictionaries, /s/, in the above words, has different pronunciations in British and American English. British English uses /s/ and American English /ʃ/. For /ʃ/, the tip of the tongue is close to the back part of the alveolar ridge forming a flat narrowing. The front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate forming the front secondary focus. Fricatives /s/ and /ʃ/ are called sibilant sounds which are made by producing a narrow, groove-like structure between the blade of the tongue and the back part of the alveolar ridge. These sounds have a high frequency hiss characteristics. (as cited in Crystal, 2003, p. 417)

TABLEAU 17

Base word	British English	American English
booth	/bu:ð/	[bu:θ]
toolbooth	/tu:θ bu:ð/	[tu:θ bu:θ]

In tableau 17, the two examples above represent different pronunciations of /th/ between British and American English. Symbols /ð/ and /θ/ for /th/ are called dental or apico-dental. /ð/ is a voiced and /θ/ is a voiceless dental fricative. In pronunciation of these two sounds, the tongue is placed between the front teeth or normally behind the teeth, with the tip touching the inner side of the lower front teeth and the blade touching the inner side of the upper teeth. The air escapes through the gaps between the tongue and the teeth. (as cited in Roach, 2009, p. 41). In American English, the pronunciation of these sounds is somewhat interdental, i.e. with tongue tip slightly protruding though between the upper and the lower teeth. In British English more commonly slightly post-dental, i.e. with tongue tip and rim behind or barely touching the inner edges of the upper teeth. (as cited in Cateford, 2003, p. 193).

X. CONCLUSION

Every language possesses its rudimentary component sounds. English becomes an important language which is learned/acquired around the world. For learning English, sounds, which are the very beginning elements, should be learned. It must be said that, there is a lot of accentual variation both within Britain and the United States. Also, some Eastern accents in the USA sound closer to BBC pronunciation than to General American, while some British accents resemble General American rather than BBC English. Nevertheless, RP (received pronunciation) and GA (General American) still are, and will most probably continue to be the two accents which learners of English who wish to acquire (near) native-like pronunciation take as their model. (as cited in Dimitrova, Snezhina, 2010). As a conclusion, the information and data presented in this article will make foreign or English language learners have a better realization of the varieties between British and American English. Moreover, this article will help them use either of the two English varieties consciously and have a better understanding and knowledge of what they use. This paper will also pave the way for further research concerning other aspects of the varieties between British and American English as well for those interested in these fields. Besides phonetic varieties, there are other differences including vocabulary, spellings, grammars, idioms between these two languages provide a wide range of considerable knowledge for researchers.

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