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ОСВІТА, НАУКА ТА ВИРОБНИЦТВО: РОЗВИТОК І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH

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The theme of our investigation is linguistic aspects of American and British English. British English is considered to be the classical, exemplary variant. It has the status of the national standard of pronunciation in the United Kingdom. BBC adopted RP for the use by its news-readers since 1920 [1, p. 72]. But “the circle of native speakers is extremely narrow – only 3-5% of the Earth’s population” [2, p. 204]. General American has wider level of usage – approximately 33% [2, p. 207]. It comprises the majority of American accents from Ohio and to the Pacific coast. Some scholars consider this variant of English to be standard for the USA, others claim that there is no nationwide pronunciation standard. These two accents have a number of differences.

In grammar and syntax American and British English are different in the usage of:

1. auxiliaries and modals. If you ask a British friend whether he thinks Charles has mailed your letters and he is not sure, he will answer: “He may have done”. An American would have said: “He may have” [3, p. 379].

2. “shall” is more frequently used in British than in American English. The negative form of “shall” – “shan’t” is almost never used in American English. It is usually replaced by “won’t” or “am not going to” [4, p. 34].

3. irregular verbs: the verbs “fit”, “quit”, “wet” are regular in British English, but irregular in American English. In American English the past participle of “get” is either “gotten” or “got”. “Gotten” is never used in modern British English. In Britain they use only “got” [5, p. 16].

4. Past Simple and Present Perfect: In AmE these two tenses are often interchangeable in conditions where only the Present Perfect can be used in BrE: BrE – I’ve lost my keys. Have you seen them?; AmE – I’ve lost my keys. Have you seen them? or I lost my keys. Did you see them? [5, p. 17].

5. In BrE collective nouns like “government”, “staff”, “company”, “firm”, “audience”, “family”, “team”, etc., can take either a singular or a plural verb. In American English, such nouns usually take a singular verb [5, p. 20].

The pronunciation in British and American English is remarkably different. The main differences are:

1. The presence of rhotic accent: null – [r]: “course”, “car”
2. Differences in vowel pronunciation: [ɒ] – [ɑ:]: “hot”, “top”, [ai] – [i]: “hostile”, “missile”, [a:] – [æ]: “chance”, “fast”, [ʌ] – [ɜ:]: “courage”, “hurry”
3. Differences in consonant pronunciation: [tʃ] – [tʃ]: “writer”, “rider”
4. Most Americans have yod-dropping following /ə t d s z n l/, e.g. “studio” /’studiu/, “nude” /nʊd/, “duke” /dʊk/ [6, p. 6].

Spelling differences:

1. the -ise words: the British English words “apologise”, “paralyse”, “criticise” in American English are written in such way: “apologize”, “paralyze”, “criticize”;
2. certain conjugated forms (“travelled”, “travelling”) or derived forms (“traveller”, “jeweller”) where the British double consonants;
3. -xion words: “connexion”, “inflexion”, but “confection”, “inspection”;

4. -ce words: “defence”, “pretence”, “licence” and “practice” as nouns, but “license” and “practise” preferred as verbs;

5. words of Greek derivation containing the diphthongs “ae” or “oe”, from which Americans usually drop the a or o, like “aetiology”, “anaesthesia” [3, p. 381].

6. idiosyncratic differences: “jail” – “gaol”, “tyre” – “tire”, “cheque” – “check”, “yoghurt” – “yogurt”, “programme” – “program” [6, p. 5].

Between these two accents we also can find some lexical differences. A lexeme which is native to the USA is called an Americanism. The word which is characteristic to British English, is Bricitism [7, p. 16]. In order to distinguish Americanisms and Bricitisms, we analyzed the novel of E. Hemingway “Men without Women”.

For example, in a sentence “The plate said: “The Bull ‘Mariposa’ of the Duke of Veragua, which accepted 9 varas for 7 caballos...”, E. Hemingway uses the words “plate”, “varas”, “caballos” [8, p. 6]. Commonly we denominate with the word plate a flat dish, from which food is eaten or served. But in this case it means “a beautiful, attractive person” (American slang) [7, p. 346].

The plot is developing in Spain. That is why in this sentence, except Americanisms, we can find various Hispanisms: “varas” – series of horizontal lines; “caballos” – horses. We may consider them barbarisms. “If you stand in with Retana in this town, you are a made man” [8, p. 9]. In American slang “man” means “boss” [7, p. 293]. So, in this sentence “made man” means “a man, whose success in life is assured”. “In the fall the war was always there, but we didn’t go to it any more” [8, p. 25]. “Fall” is autumn. Americans and Canadians say “in the fall” instead of British variant “in autumn” [7, p. 183].

Transport systems in America and Great Britain have some divergences. One of them is the names of the same vehicles. Besides, Americans locomote, using tram-track, but British people – line. So, in “Men without Women” we read: “We followed the tram-track into the centre of town” [8, p. 41]. British people use the word “pavement” or “footpath” for a paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road. The synonym of this lexeme, that has its origin in the USA, is “sidewalk”. E. g., E. Hemingway writes: “... women would crowd together on the sidewalk so that we would have had to jostle them to get by...” [8, p. 26]. “Jostle” is an American slang word that means “to steal something” [7, p. 264].

If we study the main standardized varieties of America and British English, we come to the conclusion that:

- in grammar they are very similar;
- in spelling they are very similar (in spite of some changes);
- in vocabulary they are different in some areas, but strikingly the same in core vocabulary;
- in pronunciation they are clearly different, but generally mutually intelligible.

Ernest Hemingway reflected in his works American variant of the English language and American lifestyle. Anyway, his novel “Men without Women” is a remarkable example of fiction that also demonstrates us some lexemes, usually used in Great Britain. And it proves once more that the English language in America and Britain remains the same language, despite numerous differences in grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.