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**ONLINE & FACE-TO-FACE PARTICIPATION**

**CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS  
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## CONGRESS ID

## CONGRESS NAME

5<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL BAŞKENT CONGRESS ON PHYSICAL,  
SOCIAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

## DATE AND VENUE

JUNE 11-12, 2022

ONLINE & FACE TO FACE PARTICIPATION (FROM 25 DIFFERENT  
COUNTRIES)

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*1 Foreign Participants*

### EVALUATION PROCESS

**All Submissions Have Passed a Double-Blind Referee Evaluation Process**

**All Responsibility for the Works Belongs to the Author**

# SPEECH VARIETIES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: BRITISH VS. AMERICAN

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## ABSTRACT

Speakers of a language manifest all kinds of differences, which makes languages stratified on every level – phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic and in three dimensions – temporal, spatial, and social. This makes their varieties and dialects.

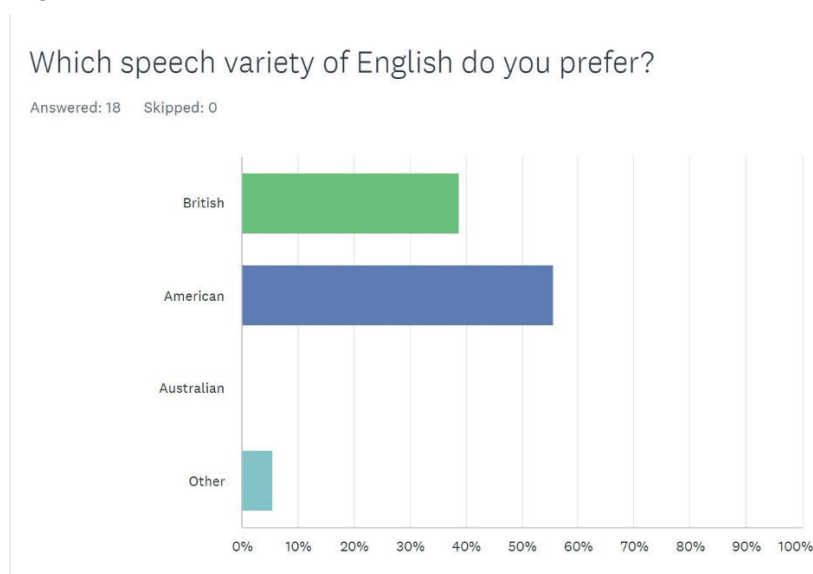
Nevertheless, it remains the case that although spoken American and British English are generally mutually intelligible, there are enough differences to cause occasional misunderstandings or at times embarrassment. Written forms of American and British English as found in newspapers and textbooks vary little in their essential features, with only occasional noticeable differences in comparable media. This kind of formal English, particularly written English, is often called standard English. An unofficial standard for spoken American English has also developed, as a result of mass media and geographic and social mobility. The paper will focus on the background of British and American English along with comparative analysis of British and American pronunciation. Within British English pronunciation, one speech variety, the so-called Received Pronunciation, is recognized which also will be discussed and it is really important when speaking about English pronunciation.

**Key words:** phonology, phonetics, dialects, accent, standard English, pronunciation, RP.

## INTRODUCTION

Speakers of a language manifest all kinds of differences, which makes languages stratified on every level – phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic, in three dimensions – temporal, spatial, and social. This makes their varieties and dialects. Varieties in the pronunciation of a language, including intonation, are often called accents. An accent as a speech variety is a way a person pronounces words depending on the area/country they come from. ‘Language transfer’ is the transfer of linguistic specifics acquired in the native tongue to the second or foreign language. Present-day English is divided into a number of varieties in pronunciation. ‘Englishness refers to all the English language varieties that have been used and are still used worldwide. Regarding this, there is the Scottish English, American English, Australian English, New Zealand English, South African English, Irish English (Hiberno). Very often when working with students from different backgrounds it is obvious that they speak the language differently. Students at “Goce Delchev” University study the course Phonetics and Phonology during their second year of studies and consider this course a very difficult one. The reason for that is the fact that within the course, rules about pronunciation in terms of RP (received pronunciation) are taught and they are accustomed to following the American variety because they are more exposed to it. In

connection to this, a short survey was conducted among our students and the answer to the first question can be seen in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1.** Preference of speech variety

From one hand, dialect is a form of language that is spoken by people that belong to a certain area within a country. Dialects may contain different grammar rules and different vocabulary. According to Etman and Beex (2015) dialect can be defined as the language characteristics of a specific community. As such, dialect can be recognized by a speaker's phonemes, pronunciation, and traits such as tonality, loudness, and nasality. However, differences in pronunciation according to temporal dimension amount to phonetic differences between younger and older generations as well. Social dialects concern distinctions among social and professional strata and classes. On the other hand, geographical dialects refer to various areas in which a variety of English is spoken. Sometimes it is even possible to identify speech characteristics of a part of a town (East End in London, Brooklyn in New York, etc.). However, more attention is paid to specific features of wider regions (Scotland, Ireland, England, Canada, Eastern or Southern States, Australia etc.). Idiolect is an individual's distinctive and unique use of language, including speech. This unique usage encompasses vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

## RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP)

Within British English pronunciation, one speech variety, the so-called Received Pronunciation, is recognized.

RP is neither geographical nor social dialect, since in present-day English it is not associated with any specific region or social circle in Britain. It originated as a local speech of the upper class of the southeast England and of London, as a political, cultural and economic center. In the recent past, RP was associated with highly educated people and with the speech of BBC announcers. RP does not enjoy its former prestige, since nowadays all kinds of dialects are used in formal and public communication. Nowadays, with introducing the term in Phonetics and Phonology, students find this term obsolete and tend to avoid it but still are eager to learn more about it. It must be pointed out that the participants in this survey have not yet taken the course in Phonetics and Phonology and most of them are acquainted with RP (Figure 2):

Are you familiar with the term Received Pronunciation?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0

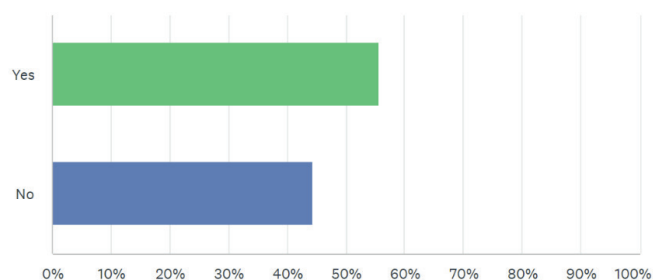


Figure 2. RP

Thus, RP cannot be said to be the standard pronunciation. However, RP has become a model to which speakers measure their own dialect and the future of RP is in the mouths of posh young things who if anything were liable to sound even posher than their elders (Gimson, 1970). RP is also a model imitated in countries in which English is taught as a foreign language if British English is chosen.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH VARIETY

English Language Teaching (ELT) and Language Testing industries have always had a major influence on the propagation of certain beliefs about which accents should be preferred over others.

The reference accent for British English is called Received Pronunciation (RP), nowadays somewhat more neutrally also referred to as BBC (English). The term was originally coined by Daniel Jones (1918) and was supposed to reflect the speech of educated Southern schoolboys, i.e. students attending public schools. It is often also referred to as 'the Queen's English' or 'Oxford English', but both of these terms are rather inapplicable because both accents show clear differences, at least in comparison to mainstream RP. John Wells' *Accents of English* (1982) gives an excellent outline of the different types of RP, which is really notable because it also makes one realize that RP is not something clearly tangible and eternally fixed, but an accent that keeps on changing and shows a high degree of variability, just like any other. One of the main and most important facts about RP, however, is that it is an accent that is only spoken by about 3-4% of the British population.

The reference accent for American English is called General American and is to some extent based on the speech of the more prestigious New England states, but also shows considerable variation. The English language was first introduced to America by British colonization, beginning in the early 17th century. Similarly, the language spread to numerous other parts of the world as a result of British trade and colonization elsewhere and the spread of the former British Empire, which, by 1921, held sway over a population of about 470-570 million people: approximately a quarter of the world's population at that time.

Over the past 400 years, the form of the language used in America – especially in the United States – and that used in the British Isles have diverged in a few minor ways, leading to the dialects now occasionally referred to as American English and British English. Differences between the two include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary (lexis), spelling, punctuation, idioms, formatting of dates and numbers, and so on, although the differences in written and most spoken grammar structure tend to be much more minor than those of other aspects of the language in terms of mutual intelligibility. A small

number of words have completely different meanings between the two dialects or are even unknown or not used in one of the dialects. One particular contribution towards formalizing these differences came from Noah Webster, who wrote the first American dictionary published in 1828 with the intention of showing that people in the United States spoke a different dialect from Britain, much like a regional accent (Chapman, 2002).

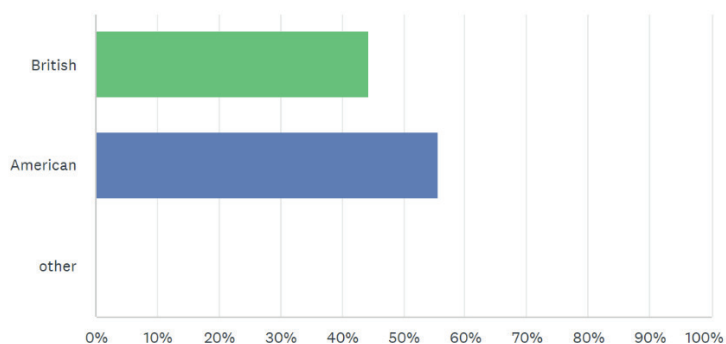
Nevertheless, it remains the case that although spoken American and British English are generally mutually intelligible, there are enough differences to cause occasional misunderstandings or at times embarrassment – for example, some words that are quite innocent in one dialect may be considered vulgar in the other. Written forms of American and British English as found in newspapers and textbooks vary little in their essential features, with only occasional noticeable differences in comparable media (comparing American newspapers to British newspapers, for example). This kind of formal English, particularly written English, is often called «standard English». An unofficial standard for spoken American English has also developed, as a result of mass media and geographic and social mobility.

## CONCLUSION

English exists in the world today as a means of international communication; as a way for people from different social groups to communicate with each other and to fulfill this function it would seem that variation in the language needs to be curtailed to a certain extent. Thus, if the language becomes too diverse it will not remain mutually comprehensible across different social groups. So, there are two impulses at work that are seemingly incompatible, or perhaps even in conflict, and the question is how to render them as consistent, as both being part of the existence of a single entity we call 'English'. Even though today's young people are more exposed to the American variety, it is better to learn the rules of RP first and then choose the variety that suits you. What is important in this sense is to achieve successful communication no matter the variety or the accent. Which variety is popular in our surrounding can be seen in Figure 3 below:

After you learn the rules for RP pronunciation of English do you want to sound like:

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



**Figure 3.** RP and Speech Variety

This is one of the central issues in English language studies today and it is a very modern issue because it has come about as a direct result of the unprecedented position that English now occupies in the world: as a language with global scope which is implicated in the history and present-day existence of societies all around the world.

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