



English spelling variants – the writing tendencies of EFL students in North Macedonia

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Introduction

- English has been long established as the lingua franca, consequently it has secured its position as an obligatory subject in schools and universities around the world.
- However, being an international and global language often conveys the wrong impression of being a unified communication tool.
- English is a global language with many varieties, shaped by history, culture, and local usage.
- All the variations whether regional, national, dialectal etc. include their own unique features.

National Standards of English

- British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) are the two dominant national standards of English.
- The differences appear in spelling, grammar and vocabulary.
- British English (standard British) is variety of English that is used and developed in Britain Isle.
- American English (General American) is variety of English that is used and developed in United States.
- British English has more formal characteristic, while American English has informal characteristic.

British vs American spelling

- English has a minimal phonetic spelling i.e. the spelling does not always represent the pronunciation
- British tends to be more conservative, while the American English spelling tends to be unsettled.
- While both forms are mutually intelligible, they follow different spelling conventions in key areas such as word endings, vowel usage, and consonant doubling.
- These variations are not mistakes, but rather standardized forms adopted in different English-speaking regions.
- Understanding these standards helps ensure clarity and consistency in writing, especially in academic, professional, and international contexts.

British vs. American Spelling Variations

1. -our vs. -or

- British: colour, honour, labour
- American: color, honor, labor

2. -re vs. -er

- British: centre, metre, theatre
- American: center, meter, theater

3. -ce vs. -se

- British: licence (noun), defence, practise (verb)
- American: license (noun & verb), defense, practice

4. -ise vs. -ize

- British: organise, realise, recognise (though "-ize" is acceptable in Oxford style)

- American: organize, realize, recognize

5. Double consonants in verbs

- British: travelled, labelled, cancelled
- American: traveled, labeled, canceled

6. ae / oe vs. e

- British: anaemia, encyclopaedia, manoeuvre
- American: anemia, encyclopedia, maneuver

7. Dropped silent letters

- British: programme, catalogue
- American: program, catalog

8. Different consonant usage

- British: tyre, gaol, cheque
- American: tire, jail, check

Conclusion

- ❖ Differences in spelling do not impair mutual intelligibility and therefore the two varieties are neither inferior nor superior to each other.
- ❖ However, it is important for learners to be aware of the major differences between the two standard varieties for consistency in their writing.
- ❖ The findings highlight the complex interplay between formal instruction, self-directed learning, and the evolving role of digital media in shaping language use.

Recommendations for EFL Teachers

➤ Raise Awareness of Language Varieties:

- Explicitly teach students the differences between British and American English, especially in spelling, vocabulary, and usage, to help them understand which variety they are learning and why.

➤ Integrate Internet-Based Materials:

- Since students primarily acquire new vocabulary from online sources, teachers should incorporate authentic digital content into lessons to align with students' real-world exposure.

➤ Clarify Textbook Limitations:

- Encourage critical engagement with textbooks and supplement them with up-to-date materials that reflect current language use.

➤ Promote Reflective Language Use:

- Guide students to be more conscious of the language variety they adopt in writing and speaking, especially in academic and professional contexts.