**Diverging or Converging Tendencies in the Development of British and American English on the Level of Lexicology**

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The question of differences between British and American English has been the subject of a large number of heated discussions among linguists both in Russia and abroad.

It is customary to consider that these two variants occupy a dominant position in the English-speaking world. With British English, the situation is fairly simple, as the English nation is universally regarded as the initial source of the English language. With American English, the situation is different. In other words, nowadays there are many variants of the English language, the so-called ‘world Englishes’, and in countries, such as Canada,Australia and New Zealand, English is used as a native language as well. However, it was the historical, cultural, and economic development of the United States that made the American variant one of the two major national varieties, along with British English.

Concerning the level of lexicology, the main notions are those of Briticism and Americanism, which refer to words and phrases that are specific to either British or American English. We should hasten to add that while studying the nature of the differences between Briticisms and Americanisms, it is crucial to focus on their interaction, interpenetration, and sociocultural environment.

A Polish linguist Karol Janicki, commenting on the modern situation, highlights *that “due to an extensive exchange of films and books as well as the spread of radio and television, a number of originally American words and expressions also began to be used in Britain”* [Karol Janicki 1977: 56]. Furthermore, in David Crystal’s opinion, “the future status of English must be bound up to some extent with the future of that country” (meaning the USA) [Crystal 1997:127]. On the one hand, some Briticisms are perfectly acceptable in many areas of America, while on the other – numerous Americanisms have become familiar in Britain due to an increase in transatlantic travel and the influence of broadcast media.

It is crucial to mention A.D. Shveitser’s approach to the study of the deep nature of divergences between British and American English. To put it in a nutshell, A.D. Shveitser believes that the study of discrepancies of this kind requires particular attention to the function of the word in different contexts. Therefore, many words are used in both varieties of English, but they may have different meanings or connotations depending on the context.

Moreover, the author takes into account all the meanings of the word to identify the main types of lexical and semantic discrepancies: *lexico-semantic variants* and *lexico-semantic analogues*. Also, he notes that “*the boundaries between the British and American varieties of English are becoming more and more mobile*” [Швейцер 1963: 88].

Given that, in our investigation we set out to investigate the current state of interaction between these variants of English. Using corpora data, it is possible to observe whether the lexical uses are diverging or converging.

For instance, let us turn to the pair 'pavement' (Briticism) and 'sidewalk' (Americanism). At first sight, the situation with the interaction of these words is fairly simple: frequency data from the corpora suggests that these are locally marked lexical units which means their usage tends to diverge (especially while observing the chronological date from the COCA). However, when looking more closely it turns out that in a substantial number of contexts the Briticism ‘pavement’ is used in the meaning *“the hard surface of a road”* (which is marked as American in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). Therefore, it can be assumed that there is a converging tendency.

In addition, from this perspective such equivalents as *'flat'* and *'apartment'*, *'janitor'* and *'caretaker', 'highway robbery'* and *'daylight* robbery' can be analysed in order to observe either diverging or converging tendency.

In conclusion, the evolving nature of language is evident in the mobile boundaries between British and American varieties. In this regard, corpora data provide valuable insights into converging or diverging tendencies. It is particularly important to observe the evolution of individual lexical units in order to identify trends at a more global level later on. Furthermore, by making observations about these trends in language development, it is possible to delve into the actual interaction between British and American culture as it goes without saying that the language reflects charecteristic traits of both British and American mentality.

**Literature**

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