

BRITISH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH (A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS)

Muhammad Zuhri Dj.
STAIN Watampone
zuhrigbdije@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this modern age, it cannot be denied that mastery of English is indispensable. As an international language, English has now dominates worldwide. English is the language most widely used in many countries in this hemisphere, including in the organization of the United Nations. However, sometimes some people feel confused when they want to use the vocabulary or grammar in English. One reason is the lack of a more comprehensively understanding of the kinds of variants or English language itself. Judging from the magnitude of the effect and the number of people who use a variant of English, then British English (BE) and American English (AE) was the most widely used. Despite the differences in two variants of this language do not cause communication problems for native speakers, but for some people in the world who are not native speakers especially often cause problems of its own. Not infrequently they are confused in choosing the right vocabulary or grammar to express their point. Even in the written language, sometimes there are people who are not consistent in choosing between British English or American English. Whereas in some references mentioned that the consistency in the use of one of the variants of language in written language is necessary.

Keywords: British English, American English, Vocabulary, Spelling, and Grammar

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is the most important aspect in human interaction. It is considered as a social process (J. Estill Alexander, 1979: 5). According to Ronald W. Langker (1973: 134), language is a system of communication. Almost all the people from many different countries around the world use it to communicate.

In daily life, language plays the crucial role and it helps the human being to express what they think. According to Finch, language is used for an almost infinite number of purposes, from

writing letters, or notes to milkman, gossiping with our friends, making speeches and talking to ourselves in mirror (George Finch, 1998: 22).

People speaking different languages populate many areas of the world. There is no clear information about the amount of language in this world. Commonly, reference or books mentioned there are about 6.700 languages (Kushartanti, dkk., 2005: 185).

However, the languages that most spoken in the world today belong to the Indo-European family which include languages such as English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Hindi; the Sino-Tibetan languages which include Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese and many others; Semitic languages which include Arabic, Amharic and Hebrew; and the Bantu languages which include Swahili, Zulu, Shona and hundreds of other languages spoken throughout Africa (Wikipedia, 2012).

Among languages mentioned above, English is one of the most important language in communication because it is used as a tool of communication among the nations in all over the world. In wider communities, English has become an international language. In Indonesia, English is compulsory subject in public school. It is taught from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, until university level. The main goal is to have the students master it soon so that it will advance students in science and technology.

English as International language has two major varieties, namely: British English (BE) and American English (AE). There are many differences both of them, such as differences in spelling, pronunciation, abbreviations, vocabulary, and grammar. For native speaker, those differences are not problem because they understand about those differences. However, for countries where English is as a foreign language, such as China, Japan, France, Germany, Mexico, Israel, Indonesia, and many more, sometimes become as a problem.

Commonly, Indonesian English material and teaching do not differentiate between British English and American English. Sometimes both are mixed. Therefore, students sometimes become confused, which one is correct or incorrect. Finally, they doubt to choose spelling, vocabulary, and grammar to express their aim. For example, when the students argue about the

meaning of a word *can*. Some students said that the meaning of the word *can* is *kaleng*, but the others said that the meaning of the word *can* is *dapat*. Then, the word *kaleng* in English is *tin*. This may cause the students upset when we try to explain that it can be translated the word *can* with *kaleng* and *dapat*. Thus, it is very important to explain to the students that the word *can* has meaning *kaleng* belongs to American English, but the word *tin* has meaning *kaleng* belongs to British English.

Through this writing, readers can understand the differences between British English and American English clearly, especially, for the higher class. In addition, when using English, in particular 'writing', the writer should be consistent in using British English or American English (Yusup Priya Sudiarja, 2006: 220).

Therefore, it can be denied that English learners must know and understand about British English and American English. The teacher or lecture can study before teach to their students. They can be found in many references such as books, article, and internet because there are many references about them, but they have not explained more clear and detail yet at curriculum of English lesson from basic school up to the university. Thus, students will not be upset again and they can also choose which one they want to use.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Concept of British English and American English

Commonly, each language is "branch" of language family tree. A language family tree has many branches which are not connected directly or really different. English and French, for instance, derived from the same tree. It is called the Indo European Group. Most of the branches of the Indo European Group are used by people who lived in Indian and Europe.

Actually, there are many language family tree in this world besides the Indo European Group such as Sino-Tibetika Group, Altaic Group, Semitic Group, and many more (David Crystal, 2003:121). However, the Indo European Group is used as important language in the world. Latin and the modern Romance languages, The Slavic languages, Greek, English, Dutch, French,

Italian, Sanskrit, Hindi, and Portuguese are the branches of the Indo European Group.

During the first half of the twentieth century, English gradually became a leading language of international political, academic, and community meetings. English is often used with common agreement and is usually called Lingua Franca that is a language used by people who have no common language to communicate (Muh. Basri Wello, 1998: 2). It is also used as mother tongue and second language in many countries. Thus, it has many varieties, i.e. British English, American English, Australian English, New Zealand English, South African English, Singaporean English, and Black English. However, British English and American English are used of many countries and have major effect in this world (Wishnubroto Widarso, 1989: 14)

British English is variety of English that used and developed in Britain. It is also called Received Pronunciation. Whereas, American English is variety of English that used and developed in the United States. It is also called General American. British English has formal characteristic because it is influenced by Great Britain Kingdom (monarchic) where everything is more formal and having to do with protocol. It is learned at school and university. Whereas, American English has informal characteristic. Today, American English is particularly influence in the world due to the USA's dominance of cinema, television, popular music, trade, and technology (including the internet). Then, it is more popular because the biggest entertainment industry in this world is in the United States. Therefore, Harry Potter book, masterwork of JK Rowling, entitled "*Philosopher Stone*" (British English) has been changed with "*Sorcerer Stone*" (American English) because of business consideration.

When look at the curriculum of English lesson in Indonesia from basic up to the university, the language components, grammar, vocabularies, and structure, do not consist of one style, but both. English in Indonesia is considered as foreign language, and it belongs of International purpose, since Indonesian students should know which is style more appropriate to be used when they will finish a task of grammar. In this writing, the writers use term *comparative study* because there are two items that want to be compared, namely British English and

American English. Related the case above, the writers want to explain the differences between British English and American English. However, the writers restrict those differences in three points, namely: vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

2. The Difference between British English and American English

a. Vocabulary

There are many differences vocabulary items in American English and British English. Here they are:

Britih English (BE)	American English (AE)	Meaning
diary	agenda	buku agenda
lift	elevator	lift
aeroplane	airplane	pesawat terbang
minder	baby sitter	pengasuh bayi
cashier	bank teller	pegawai bank
tin	can	kaleng
mobile phone	cellular phone	telepon genggam
bill	check	nota pembayaran
closure	closing	penutupan
biscuit	cookies	biskuit
mad	crazy	gila
druggist	chemist	apoteker
draft	draught	sketsa
blackboard rubber	eraser	penghapus papan tulis
ground floor	first floor	lantai dasar
torch	flashlight	senter
soccer	football	sepakbola
rubbish	garbage, trash	sampah
petrol	gas (gasoline)	bensin
grey	gray	abu-abu
receding hair	gray hair	uban
secondary school	high school	sekolah menengah
crossroad	intersection	perempatan jalan
jam	jelly	selai
jewellery	jewelry	perhiasan
nursery	kindergarten	taman kanak-kanak
number plate	license plate	pelat nomor (kendaraan)
queue	line	antrean
postman	mailman	tukang pos
compulsory	mandatory	wajib

cinema	movie theater	gedung bioskop
moustache	mustache	kumis
journalist	newsman	wartawan
exercise book	notebook	buku catatan
sea	ocean	lautan
trousers	pants	celana panjang
spotted	polka-dotted	bermotif bulatan-bulatan (kain)
crisp	potato chips	keripik kentang
public transport	public transportation	angkutan umum
toilet	rest room	toilet
hire car	rental car	mobil sewaan
right now	at the moment	saat ini
railway	railroad	jalan kereta api
scales	scale	timbangan
timetable	schedule	jadwal
pavement	sidewalk	trottoar
cooker	stove	kompore
traffic light	stop light	lampu lalu lintas
pupil	student	siswa
underground	subway	kereta bawah tanah
roundabout	traffic circle	bundaran
railway station	train station	stasiun kereta api
lorry van	truck	truk
holiday	vacation	liburan
waistcoat	vest	rompi
bin	wastebasket	keranjang sampah
wood	woods	hutan
woollen	woolen	kain wol
garden	yard	halaman depan
postal code	zip code	kode pos
purse	wallet	dompet
handbag	purse	dompet/tas tangan
cinema	movies	film
rubbish	trash	sampah
pudding	dessert	makanan pencuci mulut
dinner	meals	makan malam
match	game	pertandingan
angry	mad	marah
anywhere	anyplace	dimanapun
autumn	fall	musim gugur
bank notes	bank paper	uang kertas
barrister	attorney	pengacara
block of flats	apartment building	gedung apartemen

bookshop	bookstore	toko buku
car	automobile	mobil
civil servant	government employee	pegawai pemerintah
class fellow	classmate	teman sekelas
cock	rooster	ayam jantan
cupboard	closet	lemari
drawing pin	thumbtack	paku payung
driving license	driver's license	SIM
engine	motor	motor
full-stop	period	titik (tanda baca)
jeans	blue jeans	celana jins
main road	highway	jalan raya
maize	corn	jagung
maths	math	matematika
motorbike	motorcycle	sepeda motor
pail	bucket	ember, timba
refusal	non-acceptance	penolakan
shop assistance	clerk	pramuniaga
solicitor	lawyer	pengacara
stupid	dumb	bodoh
sweets	candy	permen
tap	faucet	keran
taxi	cab	taxi
to-day	today	hari ini
town	city	kota
visiting card	calling card	kartu nama
wireless	radio	radio
yours sincerely	sincerely yours	hormat saya
foreigner	stranger	orang asing
night	nite	malam
luggage	baggage	bagasi, kopor
graduate	alumnus	lulusan
terminus	terminal	terminal
to-morrow	tomorrow	besok
a milliard	a billion	satu milyar
a billion	a trillion	satu trilyun
plough	plow	bajak
contribution	donation	sumbangan
jug	pitcher	kendi
ices	ice-cream	es krim
hunter	hunter	pemburu (binatang)
first-year student	freshman	mahasiswa baru

There are some words in British English and American English which make English users confused. Here they are:

- a. Stupid : *stupid* means *bodoh* (BE), but *bodoh* in AE is *dumb*. In BE, *dumb* is *bisu*.
- b. Ground floor : *ground floor* means *lantai bawah* (BE), but *lantai bawah* in AE is *first floor*. In BE, *first floor* is *lantai atas sesudah lantai bawah*.
- c. Angry : *angry* means *marah* (BE), but *marah* in AE is *mad*. This will make someone confused because in BE, *mad* is *insane* (gila).
- d. Roadway : *roadway* means *jalan untuk kendaraan (tidak termasuk trotoar)* in BE, but *jalan untuk kendaraan* in AE is called *pavement*. *Pavement* is *trotoar* in BE, but *trotoar* in AE is *sidewalk*.
- e. Lawyer : *lawyer* means *ahli hukum* (BE), either *solicitor* (*penasehat hukum*) or *barrister* (*pengacara*), but in AE *lawyer* is *penasehat hukum* and *barrister* is *councillor* (*anggota dewan*).
- f. Timber : *timber* means *kayu* in BE, similar with *lumber* (*kayu*) in AE. However, it will make somebody confused because *lumber* means *junk and rubbish* (*barang rongsokan*) in BE.

b. Spelling

- a. *-our/-or*

On a basic, spelling of American English is simpler and shorter than British English. Many words ending *-our* in BE and *-or* in AE. Here are some examples:

British English	American English	Meaning
Colour	Color	warna
favour	favor	bantuan
favourite	favorite	kesayangan
harbour	harbor	pelabuhan
honour	honor	kehormatan
humour	humor	kelucuan
in favour of	in favor of	setuju untuk
labour	labor	perburuhan
labourer	laborer	buruh
neighbour	neighbor	tetangga
rumour	rumor	desas-desus

b. Words ending *-tre/bre* (BE) or *ter/ber* (AE)

British English	American English	Meaning
Centimetre	Centimeter	sentimeter
centre	center	pusat
fibre	fiber	serabut/serat
kilometre	kilometer	kilometer
litre	liter	liter
ministre	minister	menteri
sabre	saber	pedang
theatre	theater	teater

c. Words ending *-ence* (BE) or *-ense* (AE)

British English	American English	Meaning
Defence	Defense	pertahanan
offence	offense	serangan
pretence	pretense	kepura-puraan

d. Verbs ending in *-ise* or *-ize*

In Britain, some verbs end either *-ize* or *-ise*. Both are used. However, in America, they always end in *-ize*.

British English	American English	Meaning
Apologise	Apologize	minta maaf
civilise	civilize	memperadabkan
civilisation	civilization	peradaban
generalise	generalize	memasyarakatkan
neutralise	neutralize	menetralkan
organise	organize	mengorganisasikan
particularise	particularize	memperkhususkan
realise/realize	realize	menyadari
theoritise	theoritize	membuat teori

e. Words ending *-ogue* (BE) or *-og* (AE)

British English	American English	Meaning
Catalogue	Catalog	katalog
epilogue	epilog	epilog
monologue	monolog	monolog
prologue	prolog	prolog

f. Double *l* (BE) or single *l* (AE)

British English	American English	Meaning
Counsellor	Counselor	konselor
equalled	equaled	menyamakan
jewellery	jewelery	perhiasan
marvellous	marvelous	luar biasa
travelled	traveled	bepergian

g. Other spelling forms

British English	American English	Meaning
Archaeology	Archeology	arkeologi
cheque	check	cek
manoeuvre	maneuver	manuver
moult	molt	berganti bulu atau
practise (v)	practice (v)	kulit
programme	program	melatih
pyjamas	pajamas	program
storey	story	piyama
tyre	tire	tingkat/loteng
		ban

c. Grammar

There are a few grammatical differences between British English and American English that make the learners sometimes upset. It should be better to discuss them here so that it will be clear. Here are some examples:

a. Present perfect

In British English, the present perfect tense is used for action in the past with a result now. However, the present perfect or simple past tense can be used for American English. To make it more clear, let's see these examples:

- I *have lost* my dictionary (present perfect tense). Can you lend me yours? (BE)
- I *lost* my pen (simple past tense). Or I *have lost* my pen (present perfect tense). (AE)
- Ani is not at home. She *has gone out* (present perfect tense). (BE)
- Ani is not at home. She *has gone out* (present perfect tense). Or she *went out* (simple past tense). (AE)

We can also see their difference in using of indefinite time signal (already, just, and yet). In British English, the present perfect is used with just, already, and yet. Nevertheless, indefinite time signal (already, just, and yet) can be used in present perfect tense or simple past tense.

For example: - I *have already seen* this movie. (present perfect tense). (BE)

- I *have already seen* this movie. (present perfect tense). Or I *already saw* this movie. (simple past tense). (AE)

b. Using of word *probably* (adverb)

In BE, word *probably* is put after *auxiliary verb*, but it is put before and after *auxiliary verb* in AE.

- 1) He *has probably* met the principal by now. (BE)
- 2) He *probably has* met the principal by now. (AE)
- 3) He *has probably* met the principal by now. (AE)

c. British English usually uses word *will or shall* with pronoun *the first person* (I/we) to tell activities in the future. On the contrary, AE only uses *shall*.

For example: - I *shall/will* never forget this moment.
(BE)

- I *will never* forget this moment. (AE)

d. Preposition *in* and *on*

In BE uses preposition *in* before mention the name of street (without the number of street), but AE uses preposition *on* before mention the name of street.

1) I live *in* North Street. (BE)

2) I live *on* North Street. (AE)

e. Subjunctive

In BE, subjunctive is formal and often uses form *should+infinitive* or ordinary present and past tense after word *demand, insist, etc.* However, AE is unusual *should* after *word demand, insist, etc.*

1) I demanded that she *should apologise*.(BE)

2) I demanded *she apologize*.(AE)

f. The indefinite pronoun *One*

British often use *one* to mean "people to general", or they use *one's* or *oneself*, but American do not often use *one* to mean "people to general", nor do they use *one's* or *oneself*.

BE: *One* should look after *one's* health.

AE: *You* should look after *your* health.

g. Collective noun

Collective noun is a word which describes a group of things or people as a unit, for example: family, crowd, audience, government, team, committee. In BE, collective noun is considered as singular and plural form. Thus, it can be followed by singular verb or plural verb. It depends of our opinion, whether we consider it as a unit (singular) or as the number of members (plural). Whereas, AE usually consider collective noun as singular form. Therefore, it always followed by singular verb.

- 1) *The committee meets* tomorrow. (BE)
(Word *the committee* considers as a unit)
- 2) *The committee meet* tomorrow. (BE)
(Word *the committee* considers as the number of members)
- 3) *The team has* lost the chance to win the competition.
(AE)

h. Have or take

In BE, verb *have* is used before noun to express an activity, but in the same context, American English uses verb *take*.

- 1) Let's *have a break* for a moment. (BE)
- 2) Let's *take a break* for a moment. (AE)

i. Modal *shall* or *should*

BE uses modal *shall* for asking someone advice or opinion, but AE uses modal *should*.

- 1) *Shall* I invite her to the party? (BE)
- 2) *Should* I invite her to the party? (AE)

j. Dates

There are differences in the way dates are said and written:

BE: 4th of July 1973

AE: July 4, 1973

In BE, there is a system: 6 - 4 - 74, it means 6th of April 1974 (April the sixth or the sixth of April, nineteen seventy four).

In AE, 6 - 4 - 74 means June the fourth or the fourth of June, nineteen seventy four).

k. Numbers

The British use 'and' between hundred and the rest of the number, but the Americans leave it out.

- 1) 220 = two hundred *and* twenty (BE)
- 2) 220 = two hundred twenty (AE)

1. Regular - Irregular Forms

Some verbs have alternative regular and irregular past tense and past participle forms.

For example: dream - dreamed or dreamt. In BE, the irregular form is more often used, whereas in American English, there is a preference for the regular form.

Here are some of those verbs:

Verb	British English	American English
learn	Learnt	learned
smell	smelt	smelled
spell	spelt	spelled
spoil	spoilt	spoiled

C. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, English has become the most important language. In countries where English is either a native nor a second language, it is taught or learned as a foreign language for practical and necessary uses of communication. Therefore, mastering foreign languages comprehensively is really needed, included understanding its varieties.

There are two most popular English varieties, namely: British English and American English. They have some differences such as differences in spelling, pronunciation, abbreviations, vocabulary, and grammar. However, the writers are only focus the three of them, namely: vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

Actually, both are good and able to be used. The writers only want to emphasize that English users have to know about British English and American English to avoid confusion in using English because actually there are many differences between British English and American English. Therefore, the English users can choose appropriate vocabulary or grammar when they want to communicate by using English. Moreover, they can be more consistent in choosing one of those varieties in writing.

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