

UDC 811.111'373 : 811.111'373 (73)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.52726/as.humanities/2024.1.10>

I. V. PERISHKO

*Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of English Language Practice and Teaching Methodology,
Rivne State University of the Humanities, Rivne, Ukraine
E-mail: iryna.perishko@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5232-5945>*

D. O. BIHUNOV

*PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor at the Department of English Language Practice
and Teaching Methodology, Rivne State University of the Humanities, Rivne, Ukraine
E-mail: dmytro.bihunov@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6100-7765>*

S. A. BIHUNOVA

*PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of English Language Practice and Teaching Methodology,
Rivne State University of the Humanities, Rivne, Ukraine
E-mail: svitozara.bihunova@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6860-6939>*

MAIN DIFFERENCES IN THE VOCABULARY ON EDUCATION OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH VARIANTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

This article examines differences in the vocabulary on education in the lexical structure of American and British English, illuminating the linguistic nuances that distinguish these two major variants of the English language. Each national variant is a separate self-sufficient language system that adequately performs, first of all, the function of communication between speakers of a particular variant, so the internal study of national variants is of particular importance. The interaction and mutual influence of national and territorial variants is particularly intense at the lexical and semantic level as the lexicon is dynamic, unlike the grammar, which is not so easily changed.

According to the synchronic analysis, there are two main types of lexical and semantic differences: differences in the external, material side of lexical units, but which have a common meaning and lexical units that are similar in form but have different meanings. The lexical units of the first type are called lexical and semantic analogues, the second type are lexical and semantic divergents. The group of lexical and semantic divergents includes words that show more or less significant differences in their semantic structure with a common sound pattern. These differences can be divided into several main categories. Nevertheless, in recent years the tendency of convergent development of British and American variants prevails over the tendency of their divergence. In the process of interaction between variants, the differences that have arisen as a result of differentiated denotation will be increasingly erased. By examining the differences in the vocabulary on education at the lexical and semantic levels, the authors provide insight into the diverse lexical composition of American and British English, offering readers a deeper understanding of the rich diversity of the English language.

Key words: the English language, American English, British English, lexical structure, semantic structure, divergents, vocabulary differences.

Introduction. At the present stage of historical development, English is known to be a multinational language and it serves several nations and exists in the form of national variants (British, American, Australian, etc.).

The development of the English language is largely determined by the interaction of British and American variants of English. Historically,

a large number of differences between these variants of the English language have emerged [Liao]. This is due to both historical factors and the country's contacts with other languages, which in turn led to the emergence of borrowings that are not present in one of the language variants.

The interaction and mutual influence of national and territorial variants is particularly intense

at the lexical and semantic level. The lexicon is dynamic, unlike the grammar, which is not so easily changed. Studies by linguists show that the influence of the American variant largely determines the development of the vocabulary of other variants, especially British.

These differences have been noted by many authors. J. Witherspoon, Princeton's sixth president, even proposed to create an academy to improve the English language in America, monitor its development and publish new data.

Analysis of previous studies. Many works by both foreign scholars (R. Berndt, D. Crystal, Liao L., A. Markwardt, R. McDavid, R. Quirk, etc.) and Ukrainian scholars (K. Barantsev, R. Kritzberg, O. Semenets, Y. Zatsnyi, Y. Zhluktenko, etc.) have been devoted to the study of the issue of variantology of the English language and the American variant in particular.

The relevance of the study lies in the growing differences between the American and British variants of the English language in the field of education at the lexical and semantic level, which is of great interest to linguists. **The aim of the article** is to analyse and compare the lexical structure of the American and British variants of the English language in the field of education. To achieve this aim various dictionaries have been consulted, such as Cambridge Dictionary, Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, Longman Dictionary of American English, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Merriam-Webster Dictionary New Oxford American Dictionary, The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English.

Presentation of the main material. Language is an important aspect of human development, so different groups of people who speak the same language are separated by geographical, social or political barriers. As a result, each group develops its own variant of the language. Each national variant is a separate self-sufficient language system that adequately performs, first of all, the internal communicative function, the function of communication between speakers of a particular variant, so the internal study of national variants is of particular importance.

In the English language system two of its variants – British and American – are dominant in relation to other microsystems. David Crystal notes that the influence of British English (BE)

is explained by the expansion of British colonial power in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, and the influence of American English (AE) is due to the emergence of the United States as an economic superpower in the twentieth century. The number of native speakers of this country is almost four times higher than in Britain, which, along with the economic, scientific and technological leadership of the United States, gives AE, to some extent, control over how the language will develop in the future. [Crystal : 106].

One of the most important conditions for comparative analysis is that the phenomena being compared should not be considered in isolation, but in the context of the respective microsystems. With regard to the lexical and semantic level, this requirement means that both intersystem and intra-system connections between the units being compared are essential. According to the synchronic analysis, there are two main types of lexical and semantic differences: differences in the external, material side of lexical units, but which have a common meaning and lexical units that are similar in form but have different meanings. The lexical units of the first type are called lexical and semantic analogues, the second type are lexical and semantic divergents [Крицберг].

It is worth noting that the reason for the similarity of the meaning of lexical items that have different external expressions is that these lexical items belong to the same macrosystem. Here are examples of lexical and semantic analogues. In the American variant, *stock, newsie, game, mail* and their equivalents in the British variant: *share, newsboy, match* and *post* [Логвиненко : 10]. If to speak about such analogues in the topic of education these pairs can be noticed:

– *postgraduate* (BE) – *graduate* (AE): someone who has already received the first degree and continues his study at a university to get the next one (e.g., Master's degree, PhD);

– *houseman / house officer* (BE) – *intern* (AE): someone who is his / her first year after completing his / her medical degree and is working in a hospital;

– *open day* (BE) – *open house* (AE): a day when school, college etc. invites public to come and see their work;

– *headteacher / headmaster / headmistress / head* (BE) – *principal* (AE): someone who is in charge of school;

– *invigilator* (BE) – *proctor* (AE): someone whose duty is to watch people at the exam to prevent cheating;

– *term* (BE) – *semester* (AE): one of the periods time that school or university year is divided into and some others.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the above Americanisms are merely equivalent to the British version. In fact, the situation is much more complicated and parallels cannot be drawn between the lexical units of the American and British versions, similar to those on which bilingual dictionaries are based, i.e. parallels based on the semantic equivalence of different system units.

The group of lexical and semantic divergents includes words that show more or less significant differences in their semantic structure with a common sound pattern. These differences can be divided into several main categories. The words that are the part of the microsystems of British and American variants of literary English overlap in a certain part of their semantic structure and show differences only in the part that belongs to one of the microsystems. In such words as *reader* (General English “a person who reads”, “reviewer”, etc. and British “lecturer, university teacher”), *grant* (General English “scholarship” and British “bursary”) the coexistence of one locally marked lexical and semantic variant with the British variants is noted.

Thus, we are talking about a divergent opposition with one-sided local colouring. At the level of the opposed microsystems, the semantic structure of the words is, in one case, a combination of its General English meanings, and in the other case, a combination of its General English meanings plus a meaning peculiar to only one of the variants.

The differences that are manifested in the semantic structure of such words as *faculty* (General English “ability, talent”, British “a group of departments in a college / university, which specialises in a particular subject or subjects”, American “teaching staff”) and *provost* (General English “1) a parish priest; 2) the leader of some Scottish boroughs”, British “the title of the head of some colleges at Oxford and Cambridge”, American “a high-ranking official at a college or university” in which common English lexical

and semantic variants coexist not with one locally labelled variant, but with two – AE and BE.

Such divergent oppositions can be characterised as oppositions with two-sided local colouring. At the level of the juxtaposed microsystems, the semantic structure of each divergent is a set of meanings specific to a given variant.

Divergents do not have any coincident lexical meanings at all. Such units as *open house* (AE – “a day when school, college etc. invites public to come and see their work” and BE – “people are always welcome in that house and at any time”); *principal* (AE – “someone who is in charge of school” and BE – “someone who is in charge of college or university”); *dormitory* (AE – “a large building in a college or a university where students live” and BE – “a large room where several people can sleep, e.g. in boarding school or hostel” etc. are units of different microsystems.

At the same time, the fact that the above lexico-semantic divergents reveal a certain semantic connection makes it possible to consider them as variants of the same microsystem units.

There are a number of fundamental differences between the divergent oppositions described above. At the same time, in all the previous cases, partial semantic differences between the divergents are manifested in the different functioning of the same units, i.e. in the difference in the range of contextual environments in which these units can be found in each of the opposed microsystems.

However, these types of divergent oppositions are far from being equivalent in their proportion. Differences affecting lexical and semantic variants of words clearly prevail over differences concerning the word inventory itself. This is convincingly evidenced by the data of dictionaries, in which the notes “American English” / “AE” / “US” or “British English” / “BE” / “Br” usually accompany not the word as a whole, but only some of its meanings. According to our observations, the most typical type of divergent oppositions is the above-described oppositions with one-sided local colouring.

The group of lexical and semantic divergents includes words that have differences in their semantic structure but have a common sound structure. As it was mentioned above the noun *faculty* has the common English meaning “ability, gift, power, right” and the American meaning

“*teaching staff*” [Fisher]. It becomes clear that Americanisms are manifested only in certain meanings of the word. Moreover, in addition to the American and General English meanings it also has a meaning specific to the British version and corresponding to our “*faculty, academic department*”.

Let us give some more examples to this category. The British traditionally refer to an American *high school* as a *secondary school*, and this concept applies to both public and private schools. In America, there is also a transitional stage between primary and high school, the so-called *middle school* or *junior high school*. In the UK, the word *middle school* is used synonymously with *junior school*, which is the second half of primary school lasting 4-6 years.

The term *public school* in America and the UK has two opposite meanings. In the United States, it means a public educational institution funded by tax revenues (as, for example, state schools in Ukraine). In England and Wales, *public school* means, on the contrary, a prestigious private *independent school*, where tuition is paid. Independent schools are also called *private schools*, and this name is officially adopted for all fee-paying schools in Northern Ireland and Scotland. The name *public school* in these two regions is usually never used in the same sense as in England. However, there are exceptions – the Scottish private school Gordonstoun, where King Charles studied, is sometimes also called a *public school* (as several other schools in Scotland are). State-funded schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland are officially called *state schools*, but sometimes they are also mistakenly called *public schools*, in the American sense.

In the United States, a *state school* is a higher education institution run by a state. The confusion arises from the multiple meanings of the English word *state*, which can refer to both the state (a social institution or country) and a particular US state. The term “public” in relation to an education or an educational institution first appeared in the UK to distinguish between lessons with a teacher at home (*private education*) and classes at school (*public education*) [Crystal].

The language of the speakers of both variants also contains some other terms for special schools. For example, the term *preparatory school* in the US covers all private schools that prepare

students for university. In the UK, a preparatory school is a private school for children under the age of 13, where students prepare for the transition to a fee-paying high school. The term *parochial school* in the United States refers to a fee-paying school run by a religious organisation, most often the Catholic Church and its diocese (similar to parochial schools) [parochial education]. Modern British state schools are descended from medieval parochial schools, which were funded by local religious organisations. These, in turn, were controlled by the state through the Church of England (Anglicanism was the official religion of England). This system is partially preserved in the modern British education system, and many schools, especially primary schools (children under 11), have not lost their connection with the church. They are called *faith schools*. There are also so-called *denominational schools* run by the Roman Catholic Church and other religious organisations, not only Christian ones [State-funded faith schools].

Schools with a subject focus in the United States are referred to as *magnet schools*. They have high requirements. Such schools are funded from the state budget [What are Magnet Schools]. The British analogues of *magnet schools* are *city academies*, where education is also free [Types of Schools]. About 10% of students who pass their entrance exams are admitted to academies. In total, there are 36 *Local Education Authorities* in the UK that select the best students for specialised schools. The selection process is based on a test called *Eleven Plus*, which is taken by all students upon reaching the age of 11.

The position of Associate Professor, as well as Assistant Professor, can be found in the American university system, but in the UK such positions are not common. American *Associate Professor* is best corresponded to a *Lecturer* or *Reader* in the British system, and *Assistant* is *Research Assistant*. It should be noted that an American assistant/associate professor is not a professor, but an assistant/associate professor, i.e. he/she formally has no right to call himself/herself a professor and add the prefix *Prof.* as a *professor* (BE) is a *full professor* (AE). In the UK, *professor* is a university teacher of the highest rank in a subject area.

The first step in an academic carrier is usually *lecturer*, then *senior lecturer*, then *reader*, then eventually perhaps *professor*. It should be

mentioned that in the US, a *professor* is a full-time *teacher* at university. A *teacher* at secondary school or high school or junior college is never a *professor*.

A special case of divergents is represented by words in which the American and British meanings coincide with each other as generic and species concepts. The peculiarities of lexical items denoting realities of the American and British variants are characterised by changes at the word level and are determined by nationally marked lexical material or lexical and semantic variant of a common English word in the phrase. For example, *high school* (AE) – *secondary school* (BE), *day care* (AE) – *day nursery* (BE), *vacations* (AE) – *holidays* (BE), *class* (AE) – *lesson* (BE), *recess* (AE) – *break* (BE) etc.

Since some lexical items of one national language variant do not have the same level (equivalent) correspondence in another variant, for example, *freshman* (AE) – *first-year student* (BE); *sophomore* (AE) – *second-year student* (BE); *a mature student* (BE) – *a college or university student that is over 25 years old* (AE), etc.

The influence of the American variant on the British variant is primarily reflected in the fact that the lexicon and phraseology of the British variant continues to be enriched with a significant number of Americanisms. The analysis of AE shows that there are many words associated with the historical past, with realities unknown to the English, which have been reinterpreted in the USA (*charm school*, *civics*, *upperclassman / upperclasswoman*, *valedictorian*, etc.). Such units are not only borrowed, but also often become the basis for innovations in the British variant, i.e. the unknown realities and thus the ambiguity of the “internal form” cannot be considered a serious obstacle to the borrowing and assimilation of figurative Americanisms. Indicators of the assimilation of Americanisms in the lexical and semantic system of the British variant are their “detachment” from “the American context”, the formation of elements of the word and phrase paradigm, i.e. participation in word and phrase formation processes.

In recent years, much has been written about the fact that the tendency of convergent development of British and American variants prevails over the tendency of their divergence. Indeed, at the present stage of scientific and technological progress and the information “explosion”, this is the development of national variants. In the process of interaction between variants, the differences that have arisen as a result of differentiated denotation will be increasingly erased. However, the speakers of different variants will continue to differ primarily in the different means of implementing the same linguistic material, which includes verbal reactions to the same situations. The intralinguistic resources that arise in the process of interaction between the literary language and spoken varieties constitute an important source of vocabulary development in the context of the growing trend towards the democratisation of the English language, towards the convergence of the written and literary language with the spoken language.

Conclusions. Thus, there are a significant number of differences in the meanings of words between the American and British variants of the English language. The British and Americans use different words for the same concepts. In the category of AE and BE, there are two completely different groups of lexical units: words and collocations that are locally modified analogues of other lexical units expressing the same concept and lexical units denoting objects and phenomena specific to the realities of a particular variant of English.

However, based on the analysed material, it can be concluded that the American and British variants of English have more in common than different. The interaction of British and American variants is one of the determining factors in the development of vocabulary. It has been determined that the influence of the American variant on the British variant is observed in the process of expanding the lexicon of the British variant with a significant number of Americanisms that enrich the range of nominal and expressive means, so the American variant acts as a stimulant of certain semantic and word-formation tendencies of the British variant.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Крицберг Р. Я. Дивергенція та конвергенція регіональних варіантів англійської мови : автореф. дис. на здобуття наук. ступеня докт. філ. наук : 10.02.04. Київ : КНЛУ, 2001. 32 с.
2. Логвиненко Н. М. Відмінності між британськими та американським варіантами англійської мови крізь призму теорії та методики. *Англійська мова та література*. 2012. № 14. С. 12–15.
3. Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. 491 p.
4. Fisher, J. H. *British and American, Continuity and Divergence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 85 p.
5. Liao, L. The Analysis of Influence and Cause of British English on American English and New Zealand English. *SHS Web of Conferences. CLEC 2023*. Vol. 168, 03006. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202316803006>

SOURCES

1. Abate F.R. (Ed.). (1999). *The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press.
2. Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>
3. Magnet Schools of America. Retrieved from: <https://magnet.edu/about/what-are-magnet-schools>
4. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
5. Parochial education. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/parochial-education>
6. Pearson Education. (2008). *Longman Dictionary of American English*. 4th ed. Pearson Education ESL
7. State-funded faith schools. Retrieved from: <https://humanists.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/>
8. Sinclair, J. (Ed.). (2001). *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. 4th ed. Collins ELT.
9. Stevenson A. & Lindberg Ch. A. (2010) *New Oxford American Dictionary*. 3d ed. Oxford University Press.
10. Types of schools: Academies. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

REFERENCES

1. Kritisberh R. Ya. (2001) Dyverhentsiia ta konverhentsiia rehionalnykh variantiv anhliiskoi movy [Lohvynenko N. M. (2012) Vidminnosti mizh brytanskymy ta amerykanskym variantamy anhliiskoi movy kriz pryзму teorii ta metodyky [Crystal, D. (2008). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. 491 p.
2. Fisher, J. H. (2001). *British and American, Continuity and Divergence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 85 p.
3. Liao, L. (2023). The Analysis of Influence and Cause of British English on American English and New Zealand English. *SHS Web of Conferences. CLEC 2023*. Vol. 168, 03006. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202316803006>

SOURCES

1. Abate F.R. (Ed.). (1999). *The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press.
 2. Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>
 3. Magnet Schools of America. Retrieved from: <https://magnet.edu/about/what-are-magnet-schools>
 4. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
 5. Parochial education. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/parochial-education>
 6. Pearson Education. (2008). *Longman Dictionary of American English*. 4th ed. Pearson Education ESL
 7. State-funded faith schools. Retrieved from: <https://humanists.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/>
 8. Sinclair, J. (Ed.). (2001). *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. 4th ed. Collins ELT.
 9. Stevenson A. & Lindberg Ch. A. (2010) *New Oxford American Dictionary*. 3d ed. Oxford University Press.
 10. Types of schools: Academies. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>
-

І. В. ПЕРІШКО

*кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри практики англійської мови та методики викладання,
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет, м. Рівне, Україна
Електронна пошта: iryna.perishko@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5232-5945>*

Д. О. БІГУНОВ

*кандидат психологічних наук,
доцент кафедри практики англійської мови та методики викладання,
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет, м. Рівне, Україна
Електронна пошта: dmytro.bihunov@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6100-7765>*

С. А. БІГУНОВА

*кандидат психологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри практики англійської мови та методики викладання,
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет, м. Рівне, Україна
Електронна пошта: svitozara.bihunova@rshu.edu.ua
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6860-6939>*

ОСНОВНІ ВІДМІННОСТІ В ЛЕКСИЦІ НА ОСВІТНЮ ТЕМАТИКУ АМЕРИКАНСЬКОГО ТА БРИТАНСЬКОГО ВАРІАНТІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

У цій статті розглядаються відмінності лексичного складу на освітню тематику американського і британського варіантів англійської мови, проливаючи світло на лінгвістичні нюанси, які відрізняють ці два основні варіанти англійської мови. Кожен національний варіант є окремою самодостатньою мовною системою, яка адекватно виконує наперед функцію спілкування між носіями певного варіанта, тому внутрішнє вивчення національних варіантів набуває особливого значення. Взаємодія і взаємовплив національних і територіальних варіантів особливо інтенсивно відбувається на лексико-семантичному рівні, оскільки лексика є динамічною, на відміну від граматики, яка не так легко піддається змінам.

Як свідчить синхронний аналіз, існує два основних типи лексико-семантичних відмінностей: відмінності у зовнішній, матеріальній стороні лексичних одиниць, але які мають спільне значення, і лексичні одиниці, які схожі за формою, але мають різні значення. Лексичні одиниці першого типу називаються лексико-семантичними аналогами, другого типу – лексико-семантичними дивергентами. До групи лексико-семантичних дивергентів належать слова, які мають більш-менш значні відмінності у своїй семантичній структурі при спільній звуковій структурі. Ці відмінності можна розділити на кілька основних категорій. Проте в останні роки тенденція конвергентного розвитку британського та американського варіантів переважає над тенденцією їх дивергентності. У процесі взаємодії варіантів відмінності, що виникли внаслідок диференційованого позначення, будуть все більше стиратися. Вивчаючи відмінності вокабуляра на освітню тематику на лексичному та семантичному рівнях, автори дають уявлення про різноманітний лексичний склад американської та британської англійської мови, пропонуючи читачам глибше зрозуміти багате розмаїття англійської мови.

Ключові слова: англійська мова, американська англійська, британська англійська, лексичний склад, семантична структура, дивергенти, словникові відмінності.