

# BRITISH ENGLISH



# AND AMERICAN ENGLISH



# Historical Background

divided into:

- colonial (1607-1776)
- national (1776-1898)
- international (1898-present) periods



## COLONIAL

- British colonies
- Introduced English
- “When people do not talk with one another, they begin to talk differently.”
- Settlers, "Amerindians"

## NATIONAL

- American Revolution
- political independence followed by cultural independence
- new nation needed a sense of linguistic identity
- 1<sup>st</sup> American dictionary written by Noah Webster (1828) “*An American Dictionary of the English Language*”

# Main differences



*"We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, the language" O. Wilde*

- Pronunciation
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Spelling
- Punctuation- Mr.,Mrs.(AmE) X Mr,Mrs (BrE)
- Dates and Numbers – e.g.
  - 25/12/2009 ( BrE) X 12 / 25 /2009 (AmE)

# Pronunciation

## Differences in accent

- For many loanwords from French where AmE has final-syllable stress, BrE stresses an earlier syllable

- *café*
- *detail*
- *ballet*
- *cliché*

- AmE first-syllable, BrE last-syllable:

- *address*<sup>A2</sup>
- *m(o)ustache*<sup>A2</sup>
- *cigarette*<sup>A2</sup>
- *limousine*<sup>B2</sup>
- *magazine*<sup>B2</sup>

## Differences in the pronunciation of individual words

- *bouquet* /'bu:keɪ/ - /boʊ'keɪ, bu'keɪ/
- *garage* /'gærɪdʒ/ - /gə'rɑ(d)ʒ/
- *vase* /'vɑ:z/ - /'veɪs/
- *tomato* /tə'ma:təʊ/ - /tə'meɪtəʊ/
- *yoghurt* /'jɒgət/ - /'joʊgrət/ *compost, shone*
- *dynasty* /'dɪnəsti/ - /'daɪnəsti/ *privacy, vitamin*
- *body* /'bɒdy/ - /'bʌdi/ *from, what, was*
- *zebra* /'zebrə/ - /'zi:brə/ *leisure, inherent*
- *evolution* /i:və'lu:ʃn/ - /evə'lu:ʃn/ *hygienic, lever*

# Grammar

## ■ Irregular verbs

Get – got – got (UK) – irregular forms

Get – got – gotten (USA) – not irregular forms (more typical)

- Burn - Burnt OR burned
- Dream - dreamt OR dreamed
- Lean - leant OR leaned
- Learn - learnt OR learned
- Smell - smelt OR smelled
- Spell - spelt OR spelled
- Spill - spilt OR spilled
- Spoil - spoilt OR spoiled

## ■ Prepositions

American English - **on** the weekend

British English - **at** the weekend

American English - **on** a team

British English - **in** a team

American English - please **write me** soon

British English - please **write to me** soon

## ■ **Present perfect / Past simple**

*I've lost my key. Can you help me look for it? (UK)*

*I lost my key. Can you help me look for it? (USA)*

## ■ **Already / Just / Yet**

*I just had lunch / I've just had lunch*

*I've already seen that film / I already saw that film.*

*Have you finished your homework yet? / Did you finish your homework yet?*

## ■ **Possession** – Do you have / have you got?

## ■ Collective nouns

BrE

singular (formal agreement) v.f.  
e.g. *a committee was appointed...*

plural (notional agreement) v.f.  
e.g. *the committee were unable to agree....*

AmE

collective nouns are  
usually singular



# Vocabulary and Spelling

## ■ Words with different spelling

-or / our

-Doubled in Am. English

-ogue / og

-ce / -se

-ise / ize , yse / yze

-re / er

-Dropped e

-Simplification of *ae* (æ) and  
*oe* (œ)

U.K.	U.S.A.
colour	color
fulfil	fulfill
catalogue	catalog
licence	license
memorise	memorize
centre	center
judgement	judgment
encyclopaedia	encyclopedia

## ■ Words with different meaning

eg.

Mean:

(American English - angry, bad-humored,  
British English - not generous, tight-fisted)