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PHONETIC AND PHONOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN AMERICAN ENGLISH

Abstract. The presented scientific article is dedicated to the study of the phonetic and phonological characteristics of American English, which has gradually diverged from the British variant and formed as an independent variety. It is well known that English is one of the most extensively studied languages in the world. However, its spread to the most remote regions of the planet has led to its development in the form of various independent variants. Today, the majority of linguists unequivocally state that the American variant of English has significantly diverged from the British variant and is evolving into a distinct “language”. The divergence of American English from British English is most clearly manifested at the phonetic and phonological levels. Naturally, differences between the variants can also be observed at other linguistic levels, such as morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels. However, these differences are most prominently reflected in phonological structures and phonetic realizations. The phonetic and phonological differences between the variants of English are not limited to variations in the articulation of individual phonemes but are also evident in the realization of suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation. This article provides an in-depth exploration of the phonetic and phonological characteristics of Modern American English (MAE), highlighting its distinctive features and the factors that shape its pronunciation patterns. The study investigates the classification of vowel and consonant sounds, the organization of stress patterns, and the role of intonation in conveying meaning and speaker intent. These features are shaped by historical factors, geographical variations, and social determiners. This study examines the most significant phonetic and phonological features of Modern American English

(MAE)ç such as vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation patterns, and how dialectal variation affects them. Additionally, it examines how regional dialects influence pronunciation, leading to noticeable variations across different parts of the United States. By analyzing these elements, this article seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the phonetic and phonological foundations of Modern American English (MAE), shedding light on the dynamic nature of the language and its ongoing evolution.

Keywords: pronunciation; dialectal differences; geographical variations; comparative analysis; radical changes; British English; American English; phonological differences; morphological differences; lexical differences.

INTRODUCTION / ВСТУП

Statement of the problem / Постановка проблеми. It is well known that, in most cases, the name of a language does not coincide with the name of the country or the people who speak it. For example, when answering the question, “What language do the Swiss, Belgians, and Irish speak?” two key aspects must be taken into account. The first is the official language of the state, and the second is the language spoken by the people or nation. These must, of course, be clearly distinguished. In Switzerland, four languages have been officially recognized as state languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. In Belgium, three languages are in active use: French, spoken by the Walloons, who form an ethnic minority but reside in the capital; Dutch (Flemish), spoken by the ethnic majority; and German, spoken by the population in the south of Belgium. The linguistic situation in Ireland is also complex. The Republic of Ireland is an independent state where 15 million people speak Irish as the official language. However, Northern Ireland, being a British colony, has a population of 1.5 million who are forced to use English as the official language. Nevertheless, among themselves, they speak Irish (Gaelic).

We witnessed a similar situation during the Soviet era. At that time, Russian was the official state language, but, as in some other republics, Azerbaijani was recognized as the official language in the constitution of the Azerbaijani SSR. However, members of the upper social strata preferred to communicate in Russian. More than 30 years after gaining independence, some of these individuals still speak Russian. Yet, since the influence of Russian in our society is no longer as strong as before, these people – especially their children – are now striving to learn English, understanding that there is no other way to engage with the world. They realize that relying on translators is both costly and impractical, particularly when discretion is required. As early as 1963, the English scholar R. Quirk noted that language use is a

fundamental marker of national identity. This is why, in many cases, Americans emphasize that their country's language, like their state itself, should be recognized as distinct from British English [1, p. 2–3].

This issue is not exclusive to the United States. Throughout history, nations have fought for the preservation and recognition of their languages. Before World War II, ethnic Germans in Sudetenland (now part of the Czech Republic – V.B.) had to struggle significantly for their linguistic rights. Similarly, after India gained political independence, the issue of linguistic identity became a pressing concern. Today, English is one of India's official languages, but various ethnic groups continue to demand recognition of their native languages. As a result, nearly 19 languages are officially recognized in the country. Thus, it can be stated with absolute certainty that, like religion, language is one of the key factors determining both the internal and external freedom of individuals.

Analysis of (major) recent research and publications / Аналіз (основних) останніх досліджень і публікацій. *National Varieties of Modern English. The History of the Emergence of the English Language in America.* It is well known that the linguistic landscape of the United States is rich and complex. A large number of indigenous peoples have lived – and continue to live – on this continent, each with its own native language. Today, these languages function within a limited scope, with some still spoken by various tribes and communities across America. However, on a broader scale, these indigenous peoples are compelled to speak English, as the entire socio-political, economic, and cultural life of the U.S. is tied to the English language. Despite the local significance of tribal and minority languages, American English remains the primary means of communication across various domains.

There is no single consensus on when exactly the English language was introduced to America. According to David Crystal, the first English expedition to the New World began in 1584 under the commission of Walter Raleigh. The earliest settlers established a colony near Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina [2, p. 26]. Crystal, like his predecessor Stephen Potter, notes that the history of permanent English settlements in America dates back to 1607 [2, p. 101]. However, he associates this expedition with its arrival at Chesapeake Bay, where the colonists named their settlement Jamestown (after King James I) and referred to the region as Virginia, after Queen Elizabeth I (the Virgin Queen). Subsequent waves of settlers quickly spread along the coastline and to nearby islands, including Bermuda. In 1620, the first group of Puritans, including 35 members of the English Separatist Church, arrived in the area and began developing settlements in what is now Plymouth and Massachusetts.

The renowned English scholar Stephen Potter, author of the widely published book *Our Language*, supports the view that John Smith brought Shakespearean and Spenserian English to Virginia in 1607, and later, to Massachusetts in 1620 with the Plymouth Fathers [3]. David Crystal also mentions conflicts between the early settlers and indigenous peoples, noting that tensions somewhat eased when new groups arrived in 1590 [2].

The American variety of English has emerged as the primary competitor to British English, for several reasons. One of the main factors is that immigrants from different parts of Britain, faced with the challenges of an unfamiliar and often dangerous environment, abandoned their dialectal differences and adopted a more unified form of English.

“In all spheres of life – culture, economy, finance, education, healthcare, and beyond – the American variant of English continues to expand globally, increasingly displacing British English” [4, p. 79].

English first took root in North America in the early 17th century, with its initial norms shaped by the standards established in 17th-century England. The American variety of English now spans three and a half centuries of development. The history of English in America can be divided into two major periods:

1. The Early Period (17th–18th centuries): Characterized by the formation of American dialects.

2. The Later Period (19th–20th centuries): Marked by the development of American English as a literary standard.

The settlers, consisting of both young and middle-aged individuals, came from diverse religious, social, and cultural backgrounds. However, they quickly integrated with the local population, forming new religious communities. Some of them migrated southward to Virginia, while others settled in the northern regions, now known as New England.

AIM AND TASKS / МЕТА ТА ЗАВДАННЯ

The primary **aim** of this article is to analyze and describe the main phonetic and phonological features of Modern American English (MAE) and to examine how these features differ from British English. The study aims to show that American English is not merely a regional variant but a distinct form of English influenced by historical, social, and geographical factors.

In order to achieve this aim, the article sets out the following specific **tasks**:

- to investigate the historical roots of the English language in the USA, focusing on the formation and development of American English from the 17th century;

- to evaluate scholarly perspectives (e.g., S. Potter, D. Crystal, R. Quirk) on the status and evolution of American English as a separate national variety.
- to identify the main phonetic and phonological differences between Modern American English (MAE) and British English;
- to illustrate how American English vocabulary has diverged from British English in response to lifestyle, culture, and communication needs – supported with comparative examples.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ

In contemporary society, the fact that someone speaks English or Russian by no means indicates that he or she is ethnically English or Russian. English is being learned on a massive scale as a foreign language by both formal (planned or institutionally and financially sponsored) and informal (independent) channels, primarily in order to gain access to global developments directly from the source.

Today, the study of English in our context is quite different from other foreign languages. For instance, in 1960, the present Azerbaijan University of Languages had a Faculty of European Languages with an overall admission quota of 125 students annually. 50 of them were enrolled at German, 25 at French, and 50 at English language study. Today, the same university enrolls approximately 35–70 students in German and French, and approximately 4,000 in English studies.

This seismic shift abundantly illustrates the exponential growth in the demand for English. Consequently, the hegemony of the English language continues to hold sway over a whole range of fields—from administrative services to international business – cementing its hegemonic status.

In Shakespeare's era (circa 1600), the statements “he is English” and “he speaks English” might have sounded identical in implication. However, in today's world, such expressions have shifted dramatically, and it is now more common to hear remarks like: “He is not English, yet speaks English more fluently than the English themselves”.

In our Republic, English-language programming is featured on AzTV (Azerbaijan Television), and PTV (Public Television) broadcasts headlines that provide brief overviews of Azerbaijan's political, economic, cultural, and other current affairs in English. The linguist R. Quirk, whom we mentioned earlier, notes that today English is the native language of approximately 250 million people. When adding those who use English as a second language, the number of speakers rises to around 450 million – meaning that roughly one in every six people on the planet speaks English. As a result, some scholars express deep concern about the dominance of English, warning that its growing influence paves the way for

linguistic imperialism [1].

In 1620, Francis Bacon wrote his *Novum Organum Scientiarum* in Latin. Just 30 to 40 years after Bacon's death, Robert Boyle wrote his famous law of chemistry in English [1, p. 8]. From Boyle to Newton, and from Newton to Joseph Priestley, the English language underwent a period of refinement during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1762, Thomas Sheridan, considered the father of English drama, specifically noted the difficulties associated with learning English as a foreign language. It was shortly thereafter that the British Council assumed the responsibility for promoting the teaching of English worldwide.

What is particularly striking today is that, while three centuries ago scholars from countries like Norway or Finland published their works in Latin, they now publish their academic ideas in English. At Uppsala University in Sweden, discussions in atomic physics are conducted in English. In our Republic, it is now standard practice – no longer surprising – for the abstracts of all scholarly articles, monographs, and dissertations to be written in English.

Soon after, with the efforts of Noah Webster, new words emerged in the United States focusing on English grammar and orthography [5]. In the 18th century, the English language gradually spread into Canada and then extended to India. By the end of the century, it had reached Australia and South Africa.

Today, in a globalizing world, English is becoming the global language. As globalization continues to shape economic, cultural, political, and technological spheres, linguistic globalization appears inevitable. English now holds official language status in over 70 countries. In his book *English as a Global Language* by David Crystal describes this issue within 4 pages and provides a full list of these countries [2, p. 62–65].

Given the demographic relevance and the number of English speakers, we have decided to include this table here for its particular significance.

The table shows that although the total population of the 70 listed countries is approximately 2 024 614 000, nearly one-fourth of that population uses English either as a first or a second language. The table also reveals that there is no data on countries that emerged from the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, as the statistics it contains could not account for the linguistic situation in these newly independent states. Large-population countries such as Russia, Ukraine, and others were not included to the table. Moreover, countries like Iran and Afghanistan, which also have significant populations, are not included in the table. If we could include these omitted countries, it would be reasonable to assume that the final figures would be considerably different.

While analyzing the variability of pronunciation, T. Shevchenko identifies the following types:

- Geographical – related to the territory inhabited by a social group or a larger linguistic community;
- Social – determined by socio-economic status, social network affiliation, gender, ethnic background, and socio-demographic factors such as;
- Situational – related to the nature of the social situation, including the interlocutor and the purpose of communication [6, p. 185].

Based on the geographical principle, the author distinguishes the following categories:

- National standards – accepted norms of pronunciation in different countries, such as RP (Received Pronunciation) in the UK and GA (General American) in the USA;
- Regional variants – typical pronunciations of educated speakers in various regions of the same country;
- Local pronunciation types – representing urban and rural dialects [6, p. 185].

T. Shevchenko classifies the national pronunciation standards of the English language as follows:

- United Kingdom – RP (Received Pronunciation, or BBC English);
- United States – GA (General American, or American Network English);
- Canada – GenCan (General Canadian);
- Australia – GenAus (General Australian) [6, p. 189].

There is no need for a special table to prove that English is now a global language. The above mentioned analysis once again demonstrates that the spread of English is practically unstoppable. Most importantly, the United States – undoubtedly the world's most powerful country economically, politically, and militarily – is among the leading promoters of the language.

Another significant conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that today, the concept of a "state language" is not necessarily tied to the name or identity of the people residing within that state's territory. For instance, Canada is an independent country with a population of over 19 million, and according to the referenced table, more than 16 million of them use English as their first language.

By continuing such analysis, one can gain a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic situation in other countries as well.

RESEARCH METHODS / МЕТОДИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

The following research methods were used to investigate the phonetic and

phonological features of Modern American English (MAE) in relation to British English:

1. *Descriptive Linguistic Method* – The phonetic and phonological features of American English – including spelling were described and classified based on current linguistic models.

2. *Comparative Method* – A systematic comparison was conducted between American and British English phonology, morphology, and vocabulary. This method enabled the identification of specific points of divergence in pronunciation, word formation, and spelling norms (e.g., *color* vs. *colour*, *center* vs. *centre*).

RESEARCH RESULTS / РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Summarizing all the above mentioned, we can say that differences can be observed in writing, vocabulary and lexicon, pronunciation, spoken language syntax, and other linguistic aspects. These differences include:

1. Phonological Differences:

It should be noted that the distinctive features of American orthography were largely established by Noah Webster. In 1783, he published *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, also known as the *American Spelling Book*, and in 1828, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. While working as a teacher in New York, Webster had the opportunity to study the inconsistencies of English spelling in depth. As a reformer by nature, he was determined to implement fundamental changes, although practical necessity often required him to proceed with caution. He argued that "common sense and confidence" fully justified changes in the spelling of certain words [7, p. 140].

The spelling of the following words can be compared in two variants according to Webster's proposals:

AmE (American English Variant)	BrE (British English Variant)
public	publick
favor	favour
nabor	neighbour
hed	head
proov	prove
hiz	his
giv	give
det	debt
ruf	rough
wel	well

A comparative analysis of the examples provided demonstrates that N. Webster favored simpler, phonetically motivated spelling in the American variant. Accordingly, simplified spellings such as “our” → “or”, “ick” → “ic”, “ea” → “e”, “ov” → “oo”, “ph” → “f”, “is” → “iz”, “ve” → “v”, “bt” → “t”, “ough” → “uf”, and “ll” → “l” reflect this phonetic simplification.

Publishers of Webster’s works advised him to implement his radical changes even more extensively. However, the first two notable modifications appeared only in the words “public” and “favor.” Today, the third abridged edition of Webster’s *New International Dictionary of the English Language* is considered an official guide to American English spelling and serves as the standard in American courts [7, p. 141]. Nevertheless, these norms are primarily based on pronunciation features.

Overall, N. Webster’s [5, p. 122] orthographic reforms are classified by S. Potter into the following categories:

1) the suffix /-our/ in British English is spelled as /-or/ in the American variant:

AE	BE
favor	Favour
honor	Honour
humor	Humour
labor	Labour
ador	Adour
valor	Valour

2) the suffix /-re/ is spelled as /-er/ in American English.

AE	BE
caliber	Calibre
center	Centre
fiber	Fibre
meter	Metre
theater	Theatre

3) it was proposed that a single consonant be written instead of a double consonant:

AE	BE
traveler	Traveller
traveling	travelling
traveled	travelled
jewelry	jewellery
wagon	waggon

4) in the following nouns, /s/ was proposed instead of /c/ to reflect pronunciation more accurately:

defense	defence
offense	offence
practise	practice

5) new spelling forms were also proposed for various simplified words

AE	BE
ax	axe
catalog	catalogue
check	cheque
gail	goal
mask	masque
program	programme
story	storey

2. Morphological Differences:

S. Potter, in addressing the issue of English as used in various mass media, writes: “Journalists, radio, TV and video scriptwriters, pop singers, advertising agents, and others create new meaningful expressions every day. Some of these undergo changes either at the beginning, at the end, or at both ends of the word. Each new expression has its own era – some may be useful for just a day and then completely forgotten. Others become firmly rooted in the English language and are eventually accepted by English speakers” [7, p. 145].

In the American variety of English, several innovations can be observed in the use of suffixes. For example, suffixes in words like *musician*, *mathematician*, *physician*, and *electrician* exemplify this trend. The old term *undertaker* (a shortened form of *funeral undertaker*) has acquired an euphemistic meaning and has been replaced by *mortician*, which manages the meaning of funeral services. Thus, the suffix /-ian/ is added to *mortic*, forming a new word that refers to the practitioner.

Similar changes have occurred with the French-origin suffix /-ee/. Compare: *addressee* (the one receiving an address), *draftee* (a person drafted into military service), *selectee* (the one who is selected), etc.

3. Lexical Differences:

Changes in modern English occur most dynamically at the lexical level, which is the most active level of the language system – since there is a constant need to name newly emerging events and objects, and sometimes even old terms require renewal. New words in the vocabulary of British youth often come from other

varieties of English, primarily from the American variant. The United States has, in practical terms, created a new version of the language, and these changes have affected all levels of the language – phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic.

Naturally, this situation has led to serious disagreements among linguists regarding the British and American variants of English. Compared to the British variety, the American variant is more flexible, open to change, and easier to comprehend. At the root of the lexical differences between British and American English lies the difference in lifestyles between Americans and Britons. Thousands of words and expressions have emerged in the American variant, many of which have entered not only General English (e.g., *hitchhike*, *landslide*) but also the global lexicon.

In American English, the following types of lexical units can be distinguished. The basic vocabulary (words whose meanings do not coincide with their British equivalents) is reflected in the table.

Table

Types of lexical units

AE	BE
1	2
1 st floor	ground floor
2 nd floor	1 st floor
administration	government
apartment	flat
appetizer	starter
assignment	homework
auditorium	assembly hall
baggage	luggage
basement	cellar
bill	banknote
billion	milliard
blue	sad
can	tin
checkers	draughts
closet	wardrobe
cookie	biscuit
corn	maize
couch	sofa
druggist	chemist
elevator	Lift
eraser	rubber

Continuation of the table

1	2
fall	Autumn
fix	repair
freeway	motorway
game	match
gasoline	petrol
grade	mark
insure	ensure
intersection, junction	cross-roads
kerosene	paraffin
last name	surname
line	queue
loan	lend
located	situated
magician	conjurer
mail	post
metro/subway	tube/underground
movies	cinema
napkin	serviette
oatmeal	porridge
package	parcel
pantry	larder
pants	trousers
paraffin	white wax
pavement	road
pool	billiards
president	chairman
quiz	test, exam
reserve	book
schedule	timetable
sewer/soil pipe	drain
shop	store
shorts	briefs
shot	jab
sidewalk	pavement
soccer	football
streetcar	tram
tag	label
taxes	Rates
term paper	essay/project

Continuation of the table

1	2
truck	Lorry
two weeks	fortnight
underpass	subway
vacation	holiday
vacuum cleaner	hoover
vharf	quay
vire	telegram
vrench	spanner
zee	zed
zip code	postal code

It is clearly seen from the table that none of the 70 words match in the compared variants. However, this does not mean that an American and a Briton cannot understand each other when speaking. Today, someone arriving in the United States for the first time encounters differences in the English language, including its vocabulary. These differences are related to the application of the language in all areas.

CONCLUSIONS / ВИСНОВКИ

Summarizing all the above mentioned, we may state that changes in Modern English primarily occur at the lexical level, which is considered the most dynamic layer of the language system – new events and objects require naming, and sometimes even old terms must be updated. New words often enter the vocabulary of British youth from other varieties of English, predominantly from the American variant. In practical terms, American English has created a new linguistic system, and these changes have spread across all levels of the language – phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic. Naturally, this situation has led to significant disagreements among linguists regarding the status of British and American English. Compared to the British variant, American English is more flexible, open to change, and easier to comprehend.

Prospects for further research in this direction / Перспективи подальших досліджень у цьому напрямі. The American variant of the English language not only favors simplified spellings of individual words, but also prefers to use words in forms and meanings that differ significantly from British English. All of this demonstrates that existing words in the language often drift away from their original meanings and acquire new lexical senses and this will become the subject of our future research.

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ФОНЕТИЧНІ ТА ФОНОЛОГІЧНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ СУЧАСНОЇ АМЕРИКАНСЬКОЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Анотація. Представлену наукову статтю присвячено вивченню фонетичних та фонологічних характеристик американської англійської мови, яка поступово відокремилася від британського варіанту та сформувалася як самостійний різновид. Загальновідомо, що англійська мова є однією з найбільш вивчених мов у світі. Однак її поширення в найвіддаленіші регіони планети призвело до її розвитку у вигляді різних незалежних варіантів. Сьогодні більшість лінгвістів однозначно стверджують, що американський варіант англійської мови суттєво відійшов від британського варіанту та еволюціонує в окрему «мову». Розбіжність американської англійської мови від

британської англійської найчіткіше проявляється на фонетичному та фонологічному рівнях. Звичайно, відмінності між варіантами можна спостерігати й на інших лінгвістичних рівнях, таких як морфологічний, лексичний та синтаксичний. Однак ці відмінності найяскравіше відображаються у фонологічних структурах та фонетичних реалізаціях. Фонетичні та фонологічні відмінності між варіантами англійської мови не обмежуються лише варіаціями в артикуляції окремих фонем, а й очевидні в реалізації надсегментних ознак, таких як наголос та інтонація. У цій статті пропонується глибоке дослідження фонетичних та фонологічних характеристик сучасної американської англійської мови (MAE), висвітлюючи її відмінні риси та фактори, що формують її моделі вимови. У дослідженні досліджується класифікація голосних та приголосних звуків, організація моделей наголосу та роль інтонації в передачі значення та наміру мовця. Ці особливості формуються історичними факторами, географічними варіаціями та соціальними детермінантами. Це дослідження розглядає найважливіші фонетичні та фонологічні особливості сучасної американської англійської (MAE), такі як голосні, приголосні, наголос та інтонаційні моделі, а також те, як діалектні варіації впливають на них. Крім того, воно досліджує, як регіональні діалекти впливають на вимову, що призводить до помітних варіацій у різних частинах Сполучених Штатів. Аналізуючи ці елементи, ця стаття прагне запропонувати всебічне розуміння фонетичних та фонологічних основ сучасної американської англійської (MAE), проливаючи світло на динамічну природу мови та її постійну еволюцію.

Ключові слова: вимова; діалектні відмінності; географічні варіації; порівняльний аналіз; радикальні зміни; британська англійська; американський варіант; фонологічні відмінності; морфологічні відмінності; лексичні відмінності.

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