



## AMERICAN VARIETY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** The American variety of the English language, commonly referred to as American English (AmE), is a dynamic and influential linguistic system shaped by the country's history, geography, and cultural diversity. This article explores the development, features, and social aspects of American English. It highlights key phonological, lexical, and grammatical distinctions from British English and other world varieties. The paper also discusses the impact of immigration, media, and technology on American English. Through an in-depth analysis, it aims to present a comprehensive understanding of American English as a unique and evolving variant of the global English language.

**Keywords:** American English, dialect, variation, phonology, vocabulary, grammar, sociolinguistics, Standard American English

The English language has evolved significantly across different regions of the world, resulting in a rich tapestry of dialects and varieties. Among these, American English stands out due to the global influence of the United States in political, economic, and cultural spheres. While rooted in British English, American English has developed its own unique identity over more than four centuries. This paper examines the origins, characteristics, and sociolinguistic dimensions of American English.

The origins of American English trace back to the 17th century with the arrival of English settlers in North America. Early colonists brought Elizabethan English, which has since diverged from British English due to several factors:



- Isolation and Independence: After American independence in 1776, a desire for cultural and linguistic identity led to changes in pronunciation, vocabulary, and spelling.
- Webster's Reforms: Noah Webster's dictionary in the early 19th century played a critical role in shaping American English spelling (e.g., "color" vs. "colour", "center" vs. "centre").

Immigration has also significantly influenced American English. Waves of immigrants from Germany, Italy, Ireland, Scandinavia, and later Latin America introduced new words and accents, enriching the language.

American English exhibits distinct phonological features compared to British English:

- Rhoticity: American English is typically rhotic, meaning that the /r/ sound is pronounced in all positions (e.g., "car," "hard").
- Flapping: The intervocalic /t/ and /d/ often become a flap [ɾ], making "butter" and "ladder" sound like "budder" and "lader."
- Vowel shifts: The "cot-caught" merger occurs in some regions where both words are pronounced the same, while other areas preserve the distinction.
- Yod Dropping: Words like "new" may be pronounced as /nu/ rather than /nju/ in American English.

Regional accents within the U.S. vary significantly—from the Southern drawl to the nasal Northern accent, the California Vowel Shift, and New York or Boston speech patterns.

In addition to these, American English has incorporated many terms from Native American, Spanish, and African languages, especially in place names and cultural vocabulary.

Slang is another vibrant feature. Words like "cool," "dude," and "awesome" have become globally recognized through American movies, music, and the internet.



American English grammar also displays certain differences from British English:

- Use of the past simple vs. present perfect:
- AmE: I already ate.
- BrE: I have already eaten.
- Collective nouns: In AmE, collective nouns usually take a singular verb (e.g., “The team is winning”), while in BrE, they can be singular or plural.
- Prepositions and articles:
- AmE: on the weekend
- BrE: at the weekend
- Use of ‘gotten’ as the past participle of ‘get’:
- AmE: He has gotten better.
- BrE: He has got better.

Despite these differences, mutual intelligibility between British and American English remains high. Language in the U.S. reflects social divisions and identities. Factors such as race, ethnicity, region, class, and gender influence language use. For example:

- African American Vernacular English (AAVE): A distinctive variety with its own phonological and grammatical rules, often stigmatized but increasingly recognized for its linguistic richness.
- Latinx English: Influenced by Spanish, particularly in areas with large Hispanic populations like California and Texas.
- Code-switching is common among bilingual speakers, blending English with heritage languages.

Additionally, Standard American English (SAE) is often associated with education and media. However, the U.S. does not have an official language, and linguistic diversity is celebrated in many academic and cultural contexts.



American English is the dominant variety on the internet and in global pop culture. Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube spread American idioms, slang, and pronunciation patterns worldwide. Technology has also introduced new vocabulary, often originating in the U.S. (e.g., “selfie,” “hashtag,” “unfriend,” “Google it”).

As the digital world continues to evolve, American English adapts rapidly, often influencing other English varieties in the process. American English is widely taught around the world, often as the standard in ESL/EFL contexts due to the prominence of American textbooks, media, and universities. However, the global nature of English suggests the importance of recognizing and teaching multiple varieties, including British, Canadian, Australian, and African Englishes.

In multilingual societies, awareness of American English must be balanced with respect for local linguistic contexts and identities. American English represents more than just a dialect—it is a powerful, evolving symbol of cultural identity and international communication. From its colonial roots to its modern digital presence, American English continues to change, shaped by internal diversity and global influence. Understanding its features and functions enhances our appreciation of language variation and the role of English in the 21st century.



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