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### NORTH AMERICAN ENGLISH AND BRITISH ENGLISH: TWO ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

*The article brings into focus the idea of the divergent and convergent development revealed in the interrelations between US English usage and British English usage in the framework of the theoretical problem of the genetic and functional status of the North American variety of English in the sociolinguistic contexts of today. The paper deals with the evolution in the relations between these varieties of English that have experienced the effects of reciprocal influences. The article also raises the problem of divergent and convergent developments of the transplanted variety and its mainland source in the contemporary word.*

*The study particularly focuses on US English influences on British English caused by the extension of social functions of North American English worldwide. The paper gives some information that sheds light on the development of the North American English divergences in lexis and morphology. The research also provides some evidence on the nature of the convergent processes between US English usage and British English usage of today and defines basic forms of the relationship of linguistic units in the common lexis. The article points out the main tendencies of language changes caused by the process of convergence in present-day British English usage.*

**Key words:** *North American English, US English usage, British English usage, divergences in lexis and morphology, divergent and convergent development.*

**The aim** of the suggested study is to look into the character of North American English influences on British English usage of today and to provide some views on the nature of recent modifications in British English usage in the framework of the problem of divergent and convergent development of the transplanted variety and its mainland source. The paper considers US English divergences from the viewpoint of the genetic and functional status of the North American variety of English. The research also aims to show some specific features of relationship between North American English and British English lexical units within the common lexical system of English.

A new changing world provides new sociolinguistic contexts for development of the English language on the worldwide scale. English has largely expanded its social functions overseas and has turned into a common means of international and intercultural communication in many professional spheres. A widened scope of social functions fulfilled by North American English in the present world has made it a powerful rival to British English and has greatly changed the character of contemporary relations between US English usage and British English usage. A sharp change in the social functions of North American English worldwide poses a set of problems closely connected not only with the genetic and functional status of North American English, but also with the shifts in the relationship between British English and North American English. The problem that arises here touches upon some basic principles of the theory of language contacts that is usually mostly concerned with contacts of different language systems.

The new sociolinguistic contexts of today have shaped a new paradigm of relationship between US English and British English in which both forms of English reveal two tendencies in the history of their relations: the process of divergence and the process of convergence. The process of divergence seen through the development of vivid distinctive features is a natural evidence of the separate development of the speech communities divided by space and time. Divergent modifications, especially in lexis and pronunciation, have been going on in different sociolinguistic contexts that have resulted from the rise of new conditions in the separate development of the both varieties of English since the seventeenth – eighteenth centuries. The study of the process of convergence in the framework of the general theory of language contacts has mostly been the target in consideration of the effects of international communication between the speech communities with speakers of different languages. A wider range of perspectives can appear with the consideration of convergent processes that develop between two national varieties of the same language brought into close contact. It appears possible to apply the notion of convergence to describe a new aspect of relations between North American English and British English in view of the development of some specific features of US English that set it apart from other varieties of English. The most important of them are, firstly, the widening and growth of social functions of North American English on the worldwide scale, not only on the territory of the USA, and, secondly, the existence of literary standard established in written and oral official discourse and fixed in a considerable bulk of American literature. Other peculiar features of its development are the difference between the written and spoken modes of language, the conservation of territorial dialects, the creation of the regional and social North American English dialects and the development of language social stratification [1: 139–151].

The process of convergence that has become evident comparatively recently may be the result of the action of two factors. It can be the coincidence of parallel formations and facts based on the shared past and it may be the effect of US English influences following the extension of social functions of this variety of English. The study of the process of convergence, very often realized as an increasing force of US English influences on British English usage, may also be of interest as it touches upon the problem of interrelations between the two varieties of English that are most spread in the world communication. It becomes a more important issue in the view that a new form of English called World, or Global, English has probably been developing. American scholar John Algeo predicts that "the two great international branches of English – British and American – which are also at the present time the only two fully institutionalized varieties of the language, will continue to influence each other. Together, they are likely to form the basis for World English" [2: 175].

The process of divergence that has been making distinctive the development of English on the American continent has a complex and multifarious structure introduced and encouraged by the isolated existence of this form of English in different sociolinguistic contexts and by the separate development of speech communities divided by territory, politically, by cultural and technological development. Three sets of factors can help to explain the existing divergences between US English and British English usage: historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic. The origins of what we now perceive as American English can be found in a sociolinguistic event that took place in the seventeenth century when the English-speaking communities migrated to North America and the first colonies appeared on the east coast of the continent. The first colonists who came in 1620 on board the *Mayflower* spoke Elizabethan English with the East Midland accent as they mostly came from the central parts of England (Nottinghamshire). In later periods, more migrants speaking different dialects of English came from different parts of England and from Ireland. Their speech had experienced the influence of sailor's jargon, of different types of pidgins stemmed from various social and ethnic contacts [1: 133]. The uniformity tendencies in US English developed already in the eighteenth century and the American English literary standard was established in the nineteenth century. The two main present-day functional characteristics that can launch notable divergences in US English usage are the existence of the literary norm of North American English and the creation of American English dialects, both regional and social. A specific character of dialectal diversity observed in the speech of Americans can be due to the preservation of dialectal words or local meanings of the words that were typical of some dialectal areas of England. Some of the specifically US English language differences can show different language and social characteristics of the original local and social accents with the shift in the register of usage. For example, the North American English lexeme *burgoo* (1704) in the eighteenth century was a nautical jargon and meant "a thick oatmeal porridge as used by seamen", the North American English lexeme *buddy* (1852) "a companion" perhaps from British dialectal *butty* (1804), was still marked as colloquial in 1968. It can enter into a set of North American English formations, such as a *buddy system* [3; 4; 5; 6]. The US English literary standard can preserve some old forms, words or the lexical meanings of the words that were in current usage in the seventeenth – eighteenth centuries in England and became archaic, obsolete or came out of use in British English usage. For example, the US English use of the lexeme *fall* in the meaning of *autumn* comes back to Early Modern English usage (1545), the US English use of the lexeme *faucet* in the meaning of a (*water*) tap comes back to Late Middle English usage (1430) [7].

The language peculiarities of US English usage can also be due to the influence of new conditions of the environment under which speakers of English have lived. Partly they are the result of various language contacts with different speech communities while new migrants came to the continent. On the American continent, English experienced the influence of the mixture of the languages of different ethnic minorities, such as, Indians, later Africans and others. For example, the lexeme *moccasin* (1612) came from the Indian forms as spoken in Powhatan *mo'ckasin*, in Odjibwa *ma'kisin*, in Narragansett *moku'ssin* [3; 8]. The names of many North American animals and some plants came from different American Indian languages: *moose* (1613), *opossum* (1610), *skunk* (1634), *raccoon* (1608), *persimmon* (1612), *squash* (1643). The lexeme *wigwam* (1628) came from Ojibwa *wigwaum* as a variant of Algonkin (Algonkian) *weekuwoom*, *wikiwam*, and the lexeme *pow-pow* from Algonkin *pow waw* or *powah*. [8]. Later new lexemes came from the languages of new migrants from different countries. The lexeme *zucchini* (1925-1930) that is the Italian plural form of *zucchini*, diminutive of *zucca* appeared most probably in US English usage due to the Italian-speaking communities [4; 8].

New sociolinguistic contexts also stimulated the appearance of notions and concepts that arose in a new social, political and cultural environment of the establishment of a new state foundation with different social and political institutions. New words came into being, or old ones got new meanings to render the peculiar features of a new political system and a new social order. For example, a *sheriff* in the USA (1662) is the chief executive officer of a county, sometimes elected, whose job is to be in charge of keeping of the peace and the execution of court orders. In England and Wales, a *sheriff* (OE *scīrŷerēfa* the reeve of the shire) is a person who represents the king or queen in a particular county, and who has mainly ceremonial duties [3; 4; 9]. Other examples can be *seniors*, a *senior citizen* (British English *pensioner*), *on welfare* (British English *on benefit*). The language divergences of North American English can also be due to the independent development of culture, science and technology. Individual and, sometimes, unconnected ways of scientific and technological progress have

promoted the appearance of lexical units of technical register and the development of original and discrete terminological systems. Here is a small sampling of North American English lexemes of technical register: *cellphone* (British English *mobile phone*), *gas pedal* (British English *accelerator*), *fender* (British English *wing*), *antenna* (British English *aerial*), *fog light* (British English *fog lamp*), *turn signal* (British English *indicator*), *odometer* (British English *milometer*), *stick shift* (British English *gear stick*), *hood* (British English *bonnet*).

One more factor that can contribute to the appearance of divergences in both varieties of English is linguistic, the permanent evolvement of English as a language system. The language evolution can show different stages in its progress in both of the varieties. The development of some linguistic units can go differently in North American English and British English reflecting common language tendencies, such as transformations due to levelling processes or analogous changes. It can actualize at a different speed, not concurrently, factual realizations of potential options in the speech of communities separated by space. US English and British English usage of verbal morphological forms may give a good illustration to the nature of grammar deviations that can show a comparatively small regional variation within the common grammatical system despite the separate development of English-speaking communities since the seventeenth century. The changes in the system of the Past and Past Participle verbal forms that went intensively in Middle English and Early Modern English through phonetic and analogous changes led to the appearance of various forms of fluctuations when a new dominant regular pattern of verbal formation established itself. Shakespeare's writing can supply compelling evidence that Early Modern competing forms of the verbal formation of the Past and Past Participle forms were frequent free functional variants. Here are some illustrations. *Learned – learnt*: Servant: Perhaps you *have learned* it without book. (Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Sc. 2, l. 59) [10: 906]. Rumour: The posts come tiring on, / And not a man of them brings other news? Than they *have learnt* of me. (Henry the Fourth, Part II, Induction, ll.37 – 39) [10: 515]. *Sprung – sprang*: Juliet: My only love *sprung* from my only hate! (Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Sc. 5, l. 136) [10: 911]. Volumnia: I tell thee, daughter, I *sprang* not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. (Coriolanus, Act 1, Sc. 3, ll. 16 – 18) [10: 831].

In the eighteenth century, the regular formation became dominant and productive in the majority of the verbal forms. It became a norm in the US and British English literary standards alike, with the preservation of some verbal forms that still keep irregular paradigms in present-day English. The general process of levelling according to the dominant pattern of weak formation in the system of verbal grammatical forms has been going on uninterruptedly in both varieties of English. Still, some individual verbal forms have acquired a peripheral status and their usage can testify to the morphological divergences between US English and British English. US English usage keeps the irregular forms in the paradigm of the verbs: *to dive – dove* (in informal speech) – *dived*; *to prove – proved – proven, proved*; *to quit – quit – quit*; *to fit – fit – fit*, whereas in British English usage these verbs have regular forms. Some verbs can have a different set of irregular forms in US English and British English usage: *to get – got – gotten, got*; *to strike – struck – stricken, struck* (with difference in usage); *to shrink – shrunk, shrank – shrunk*; *to stink – stunk, stank – stunk*; *to spring – sprung, sprang – sprung*; *to spit – spat, spit – spat, spit*.

It is worthy to mention here that the process of divergence, especially in lexis, is still underway and, alongside with divergences in pronunciation, keeps the two varieties of English apart, marking the individual ways of their development. The sociolinguistic factor that promotes divergences in pronunciation and lexis, especially in forming new lexemes of technical register or lexemes found in oral informal discourse, or in establishing new meanings of lexemes, has been active in modern times in both variants of English. The following illustrations can come useful here. Some of US English lexemes of modern times are: *zwieback* (1863), *to burglarize* (1871), *highball* (1894, a strong drink), *doozy* (1916), *lawn bowling* (1929), *mutual fund* (1932), *down-home* (1938), *payola* (1938), *spelunker* (1942), *spelunking* (1944), *downscale* (1945), *zip gun* (1950), *to lowball* (1957) and *to highball* (in an estimate of the cost value), *panty hose* (1959) [8]. Some of British English lexemes of modern times are: *to burgle* (1872), *doddery* (1866), *caving* (1932), *unit trust* (1936), *clanger* (1948), *doublespeak* (1952), *down-market* (1970), *gap year* (1978), *potholing, caver, potholer, electricians, friendly* (noun), *close-run* [5; 6; 8].

The confluence of the three factors, historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic, makes it problematic sometimes to certainly define the North American English influence on British English and to distinguish cases of parallel actualization of processes inherent in the English language system despite space, time and place, and of introduction of innovations. The process of convergence, usually understood as an accompanying effect of interlingual communication between two speech communities, presupposes, on the one hand, passing over some language elements and, on the other hand, the formation of a lot of hybrid formations. In realization of the convergent process between US English and British English, hybrid formations do not arise because it takes place within the same language system. Here, the convergence shows itself mostly through three basic ways: the coincidence in the natural course of parallel evolution of two forms of the same language system divided by time and space, in levelling of the usage of two forms under the interactive influences, or in the introduction of new elements. In fact, the actualization of the possible options in the language has fostered the mutual influences of

both of the varieties. An anticipated result can be a neutralizing effect on some language divergences and shifts in lexical or grammatical usage through the reciprocal impact within the same language system. This effect is likely to bring the two patterns of usage more closely together in a new form of English used in global communication. It can also give some evidence to the way the processes of divergence and convergence work. The factual realization of the process of convergence may take three basic forms. It can bring in new lexemes that infiltrate into British usage after US English usage as an internal borrowing. The following lexemes can be some of the examples: *moccasin*, *video*, *train station*, *to snoop*, *dope*, *buddy*, *movie*. The process of introduction of the lexemes originally found in or peculiar to US English usage into British English usage, mostly in informal oral discourse, can usually be marked as *especially North American English* in British dictionaries: *movie*, *wonk*, *highball* (an alcoholic drink), *cookies* [5; 6; 9]. The process of convergence can show itself through the reintroduction of old forms or old meanings that came out of use or were once recognized as dialectal and limited in British English literary usage: *copious*, *dope*, *homespun*, *greenhorn trash*, *jeans*, *to drool*, *to wilt*, *bay window*, *overly* [3]. The influence of North American English on British English usage becomes easily visible in lexis, mostly shown through the shift of the register of lexemes or of some elements of their semantic structure. The most striking examples of late can be the usage of the lexemes *kid* (in the meaning *a child*), *guy* and *guess* (*I guess*) in the meaning *I think*. The lexeme *kid*, a Middle English Scandinavian loanword (1200), acquired the meaning *a child*, especially, *a young child*, originally low slang, in the late sixteenth-seventeenth centuries (1599, 1690) [3; 7]. In US English usage, the lexeme began to be widely used, firstly as colloquial, in the meaning of *a child*, *any young person* [4]. The lexeme *kid* was still perceived in this sense as an informal Americanism in the eighties of the previous century. In late nineties of the previous century, only the meaning *a young person* was marked as especially American usage [9]. In present-day English, the lexeme *kid* is the usual word to use in everyday spoken English [5]. The lexeme *guy* (1806), after Guy Fawkes, developed the meaning *a man*, *fellow*, *chap* in U.S. slang in 1896, and was still marked as such in the sixties of the previous century [3; 4]. Since the late nineties of the previous century, the meaning *a man* has become dominant in the semantic structure of the lexeme *guy* in informal British usage [5; 6; 9]. The usage of the plural form *guys* in an informal address to a group of people of either sex, nowadays recognized as especially American English usage, can indicate to the process of the penetration of a new form of address into British informal usage [6; 9].

The other form of convergence is a strengthening or encouraging effect of US English usage on the realization of potential optional forms, especially, in cases of the parallel development of some language elements. The impact of US English parallel morphological forms can support the fluctuations or variation within the British English literary norm. In modern British English usage, the fluctuation of the regular and irregular forms of the Past Indefinite and Past Participle of the verbs, such, as *to beseech*, *to spell*, *to strive*, *to smell* has most probably experienced a reinforcing influence of typical US English usage that usually prefers regular forms (*learned*, *smelled*, *spelled*, *burned*). Present-day British English usage admits both, regular and irregular forms of the verbs: *to burn*, *to dream*, *to dwell*, *to forecast*, *to lean*, *to learn*, *to smell*, *to spill*, *to spell* [5; 6; 9]. British English usage keeps the dominant irregular forms, sometimes marking regular forms as specially American English, of the verbs: *to leap*, *to spoil*, *to strive*, *to wake*. Taken as such, both usages reflect Early Modern English fluctuation of the morphological forms of verbs. Another tendency revealed relatively lately is the admission of the variation of the morphological forms to express hypothetical modality, for example, the variation in usage of the forms *would* / *should* of the Conditional Mood and the Suppositional *should* / Present Subjunctive. The process of penetration of US English usage of Conditional *would* without any idea of volition for all persons into British English usage already started in the first half of the previous century [11: 284]. In Modern English usage, the difference between *should* and *would* in the Conditional forms has disappeared. The forms with *would* are more preferred to express the implied condition: *If I had seen the advertisement in time, I would have applied for the job. I would be surprised if he did not agree with me* [5; 6]. To speak about imagined situations, *should* with the personal pronouns *I* and *we* is especially characteristic of formal British English usage: *If anyone treated me like that, I should complain to the manager* [5]. The use of the Present Subjunctive form has become frequent in British English usage after such verbs as *to suggest*, *to propose* (alongside with the Suppositional *should*), though in some cases it may sound rather formal. The following illustrations can be helpful here: *Liz suggested (that) I try the shop on Mill Road. I suggest (that) we go out to eat. It has been suggested that bright children (should) take their exams early* [5; 6; 9].

The introduction of lexemes, especially of social or technical register, peculiar to each of the variants into the common lexis may lead to the creation of pseudo-synonymic groups, the components of which are semantic and functional equivalents, but have the actual realization in usage mostly in one of the variants. The pseudo-synonyms are lexical units, full lexical equivalents of the same register characterized by complementary distribution imposed by sociolinguistic and territorial restrictions. The US English lexeme *checkers* (1838) is a lexical equivalent to the British English lexeme *draughts* (1400). The US English lexeme *gas*, *gasoline* (1895, in the meaning of *fuel for cars*) is a lexical equivalent to British English *petrol* (1895, in the meaning of *fuel for cars*). US English *closeout* (1925) is a lexical equivalent to British English *sellout* (1859). US English *zip code* (1964) is a lexical equivalent to British English *postcode* (1967). US English *streetcar* (1839) is a lexical

equivalent to British English *tramcar* (1873), *tram*. US English *shopping cart* is a lexical equivalent to British English *supermarket trolley*. US English *garbage truck* is a lexical equivalent to the British English *dustcart*. US English *garbage man* is a lexical equivalent to British English *dustman*. The penetration of lexical units from both variants of English into the common lexis or modifications in the semantic structure of lexical units under mutual influences can lead to the rise of synonyms with disproportionate actualization in usage. The lexemes *fall / autumn* enter into a set of synonyms in US English, whereas in British English they are not synonymic. Rather often the interrelation between the variants of English can reveal itself in the extension of the existing synonymic groups (*baby, kid, child*) or in the complicated character of the semantic structure of lexical units, for example, the semantic split observed in the semantic structure of the lexemes: *clerk, homely, to table* [5; 6; 9].

To sum up, it seems possible to conclude that the contemporary relations characteristic of the coexistence of two powerful forms of English on the worldwide scale can be described in the framework of the general theory of language contacts in terms of divergent and convergent movement. The process of divergence has brought to life language differences, mostly in lexis, between US English usage and British English usage. The process of convergence can show itself through the levelling of some language divergences between North American English and British English due to the coincidence of the ways of the natural English language development and due to increasing influences of US English usage on British English usage. The process of convergence, thus, can be the consequence of both varieties of English drawing nearer in new sociolinguistic contexts of the modern world development and of the shifts in the functional status of North American English that have made it a functional rival to British English on the global scale. A further insight into the nature of the US English and British English correlative relations of lexical units within the common lexis of English can prove productive and quite helpful.

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#### **Евченко В. В. Североамериканский и британский варианты английского языка: два аспекта развития.**

*В статье рассматриваются процессы дивергенции и конвергенции американского и британского вариантов английского языка в рамках проблемы о генетическом и функциональном статусе американского варианта английского языка. Рассматривается процесс взаимодействия обоих вариантов в связи с расширением и развитием общественных функций американского варианта английского языка в мировом пространстве. Описывается процесс становления некоторых лексических и грамматических особенностей американского варианта английского языка с учетом исторического фактора, устанавливаются основные формы взаимодействия языковых единиц в общей лексической системе английского языка, определяются основные параметры развития языковых изменений в рамках процесса конвергенции.*

**Ключевые слова:** американский вариант английского языка, британский вариант английского языка, процесс дивергенции, процесс конвергенции.

**Євченко В. В. Північноамериканський та британський варіанти англійської мови: два аспекти розвитку.**

*У статті розглянуто процеси дивергенції та конвергенції американського та британського варіантів англійської мови у рамках проблеми про генетичний і функціональний статус американського варіанту англійської мови. Розглянуто процес взаємодії обох варіантів у зв'язку з поширенням та розвитком суспільних функцій американського варіанту англійської мови у світовому просторі. Описано процес становлення деяких лексичних та граматичних особливостей американського варіанту англійської мови з урахуванням історичного фактору, встановлено основні форми взаємодії мовних одиниць в спільній лексичній системі англійської мови та визначено основні параметри розвитку спільних мовних змін у рамках процесу конвергенції.*

**Ключові слова:** американський варіант англійської мови, британський варіант англійської мови, процес дивергенції, процес конвергенції.