

Lexical Differences between American and British English: a Survey Study

GIUSEPPINA SCOTTO DI CARLO
Università degli Studi di Napoli 'Federico II' (Italy)

Abstract

This work aims at analysing reciprocal comprehension between American and British English native speakers. After a brief historical description on the main issues that have led to a differentiation of the two languages, the paper focuses on a description of lexical differences of everyday language that could lead to a complete failure of communication. In particular, the paper reports the results of a survey led among speakers of the two varieties to verify how well American and British speakers understand each other and whether they are aware of the lexical differences. The sample was asked to complete a questionnaire by writing the American equivalent of 45 British items proposed and vice versa for the British speaking sample.

Key Words: *American English, British English, lexical survey, reciprocal comprehension*

“England and America are two countries separated by a common language”-
George Bernard Shaw

0. Introduction

This paper aims at analysing reciprocal comprehension between American and British English native speakers. Separation and commonness are two very useful keywords to describe the relationship between American and British English, which has a dual nature because of the American characteristics of continuity and divergence from its mother country, Great Britain. John Hurt Fisher (2001:59) noticed that “the separation of the American nation from England after 1776 is schizophrenic, characterised on the one hand by violent rejection of English tyranny, as it was regarded by the American revolutionaries and on the other by acute nostalgia for their English culture”.

Language Design 15 (2013): 61-75)

American and British cultures are fundamentally different in their histories, economies, environments, and social organizations. Although spoken American and British English are generally mutually intelligible, there are enough differences to cause misunderstandings or even a complete failure of communication.

American English is used as a lingua franca or a second language by people in many parts of the world, including East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and China); the Americas (excluding the former British colonies Canada, Jamaica, and the Bahamas), and Liberia, in Africa.

British English is used in former colonies of the British empire, as in Africa (including South Africa and Egypt), the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh); Malta, Australia, New Zealand, and in Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand). It is also used in all Middle Eastern countries, except Israel and Saudi Arabia. Although differences do not involve formal terminology, misunderstandings are possible in everyday life language. Therefore, it is important to raise the level of mutual awareness of the differences between the speakers of the two varieties.

After a brief historical description on the main issues that have led to a differentiation of the two languages, the paper will focus on the main lexical differences between the two varieties and reports the results of a linguistic survey conducted with native speakers of the two varieties, to observe the reciprocal rate of comprehension related to everyday life lexicon.

1. Historical Context

The first divergences between the English language used in Great Britain and the variety used in the United States have a historical and nationalistic origin. The American Revolution gave strength to the necessity for a radical divergence between the new world and the mother country. In a letter to John Waldo from Monticello on August 16, 1813, Thomas Jefferson wrote: “the new circumstances under which we are placed call for new words, new phrases and for the transfer of old words to new objects an American dialect will therefore be formed”.

The American lexicographer and educator Noah Webster had already published the first American English dictionary in 1806, discussing the necessity for an American language, because England was too far away to be used as a model. The passion for complete independence from all

English authorities culminated in his '*Compendious Dictionary of English Language*' in which he proposed the creation of an independent dialect to accommodate the written language to the spoken language.

One of the main reasons for a change was that the usage of a new language would have been useful for the affirmation of a new national identity. The founding fathers' anti-English sentiment had even proposed the adaption of another language. William Gifford (in Mencken 1921:45), the first editor of the quarterly review, affirmed that there was a plan for the abandonment of English as the National language during the devolution, to substitute it with Hebrew. An American chronicler, Charles Astor, proposed to adopt Greek.

At the very beginning of the American conquest, the settlers used their own dialects, some of which still influence American nowadays.

In *Albion's Seed*, David Hackett Fisher (1989) analysed the parallels between the British area from which most immigrants came and the areas in America in which they settled. In November 1620, a group of thirty-five members of the Puritan English Separatist Church arrived in the United States. Prevented by storms by reaching Virginia, they landed at Cape Cod Bay foundering Plymouth. These settlers came from Essex, Kent, London, bringing their non-rhotic accent in New England and moving towards the Great Lakes. Because of the relative isolation of the areas, the original accent is still very influent nowadays.

On the opposite, the southerners moved towards the Gulf Coast and the Midlands, going towards the western area.

The Chesapeake area and Virginia were settled by forty thousand cavaliers escaping from the Long Parliament and the puritan role. Most of them came from London and stayed in touch with England being influenced by all changes of the English dialect.

Delaware Valley and Pennsylvania were populated by 23000 Quakers whose pronunciation was established in England before any changes occurred to English after the 18th century.

Western Africans arrived in America around the year 1619. Slaves spoke dozens of different American dialects and languages but slave traders used pidgins as the most practical solution to communicate with them.

In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch West Company settled a trading post along the Hudson River. Even though the colony did not survive into the 18th century, traces of it were left in some topographical features such as 'Brooklyn' (named after the Dutch *Breukelen*) and 'Wall Street' (from *wal*, the palisades erected against Indian raiders).

In the late 17th century, a French community settled in Louisiana. Although the British bought the colony in 1803, French influence is still strong nowadays in this area.

During the 18th century, a great wave of about 275000 immigrants from the border regions led to a blur of the regional dialects; and during the 19th century, many Europeans came from the failed 1848 revolutions, poverty, and famine, especially Irish, Germans, and Italians. Since 1970, most immigrants come from Asia and South Central America.

Nowadays, despite the divergence due to the gain of independence and the prominence of the United States, the separation between the two cultures is not complete.

2. Lexical Differences Between American And British English

“In words as fashions the same rule will hold
Alike fantastic if too new or old
be not the first by whom the new are tired
nor yet the last to lay the old aside”

Alexander Pope: An Essay on Criticism ii 133- 136

When American and British people meet, the first obvious difference is their accent, the pronunciation of words. However, at a deeper and less apparent level, vocabulary differences give the right to treat the two varieties as two completely different languages. Sometimes, words are used in different ways to name the same thing, such as for the American ‘railroad tie’ and the British ‘railway sweeper’. Sometimes, two different words are used but their meaning is quite obvious, such as for the American ‘luggage’ and the British ‘baggage’. In other cases, some words that are common in one place are rare in the other, such as the words ‘soppy’ or ‘row’: although they are listed in American dictionaries, they are very uncommon in American speech but they are quite well known in the UK. Some words retained in Great Britain have been dropped by Americans, such as ‘fortnight’ and ‘constable’ and many no longer used in British are retained in American, such as ‘mad’ (in the sense of angry), ‘fall’, ‘sick’, etc.

Of course, language is not totally imitated from one generation to another. Youth can be one of the most important social groups in language evolution, observing that younger people are more likely to experiment with language, by producing slang, deviant spellings, idioms, and expressions, some of which eventually become part of the standard.

Isolation also contributes to the differences: some dialects are separated by geographical features that naturally separate people. Reciprocal comprehension is favoured by the spread of the media, although American films are more likely to be exported in the UK rather than the reverse case.

People who decide to learn English as a foreign language can decide to choose either an American English centre or a British one, basing their choice on their needs. However, schools and universities usually teach British English. Only in recent years, some schools and universities include an analysis of the differences between the two 'Englishes' because of the increasing possibilities of contact with the two varieties. Many internet websites have sections concerning this subject, to which people can contribute giving their own testimonies to the classification and description of the differences.

2.1. Classification Of UK/US Lexical Differences

As previously said, most differences can be found in ordinary life, especially in oral speech.

Many online sources offer useful comparisons between British and American lexicon, such as the *Macmillan English Dictionary Magazine 2004* and James Smith's *American to British Dictionary*, both of which have been very useful for this work. However, the problem is that before dealing directly with speakers of the other variety, some people do not even think that there are any divergences, apart from pronunciation.

In particular, attention must be paid to false cognates. For instance, British English 'suspenders' are called 'garters' in US English, which use 'suspenders' for the British 'braces'. This also occurs for American 'shorts' that are British 'underpants'; American 'pants' are British 'trousers'. Naturally, awareness of lexical differences is not only for sake of linguistic curiosity: globalisation has increased the possibility of interaction between speakers of the two varieties, and thus the issue has urged the attention of professional linguists and translators, due to a considerable demand of the market. The following sections will briefly give a description of lexical differences in the fields of housing, transport, shopping, food, and numerical systems, as part of everyday language that could be quite confusing.

2.1.1. House Vocabulary

As regards house terminology, there is a straightforward translation from a variety to the other for some terms, such as the American ‘apartment house’, ‘condominium’, ‘duplex’, and ‘row house’, which in British are respectively a ‘block of flats’, ‘owner-occupied flat’, ‘semi-detached house’, and ‘terraced house’. In other cases, there may be no exact British equivalent for the American term, as for ‘brownstone’, used for a house made of red-brown stone, typical of nineteenth century cities in eastern US.

As regards rooms, American and British English have many words in common. However, Americans use the euphemism ‘bathroom’ as a polite synonym for the word ‘toilet’, because many Americans consider the term ‘toilet’ indelicate. The British ‘sitting room’ sounds rather old fashioned to American ears, as they always call it a ‘living room’. The word ‘cupboard’ is used with different meanings in the two varieties: the British ‘cupboard’ can be used to store all sorts of things whereas Americans use it only in kitchens. Americans would be very surprised to be told to put their clothes in a ‘cupboard’, since they use a ‘closet’. Many differences concern kitchen utensils. Americans use ‘can openers’, ‘electrical outlets’, ‘dishpans’, ‘stoves’, and ‘waste baskets’, while British use ‘tin openers’, ‘power points’, ‘washing up bowls’, ‘cookers’, and ‘waste bins’. To wash and dry dishes, American uses the expression ‘to do the dishes’, while in British it is ‘to do the washing up’. Most furniture items have the same names in the two varieties; however, the *MED Dictionary* reports that some differences can create great confusion:

To an American a bureau is a piece of furniture with drawers for holding things such as towels or items of clothing; British uses the expression ‘a chest of drawers’. To a British a bureau is a piece of furniture, but with a top part that opens and makes it a writing table. An American would call this a writing table. In American English, a cot is a light narrow bed that can be folded up, for example for camping. In fact, the British call this type of bed a camp bed. To speakers of British English a cot is a small bed for a baby with tall sides that have bars, something Americans refer to as a crib.

Moreover, tourists have to deal with level numbering differences in the US and UK. In many countries, Great Britain included, the expression ‘first floor’ is used to indicate the level above the entrance floor, while the

entrance level is designated as the 'ground floor'. American usage labels the entrance level as the 'first floor', thus 'ground floor' is not considered. To adapt to tourists or people used to the British level system, many American buildings now use the expression 'ground floor' or another name for the entrance level.

2.1.2. Transport

Many differences between American and British English are related to transport vocabulary. Whereas in British people take a 'couch', Americans say they would take a 'bus'; Americans take 'subways', whereas in Great Britain this means of transport is called an 'underground'. Americans would go by train or 'railroad', which is the American equivalent of the British term 'railway'. 'Baggage car', 'café car', 'one-way ticket', 'round-trip ticket', 'railroad' are the American equivalents of 'baggage van', 'buffet car', 'single ticket', 'return ticket', and 'railway carriage' in British. Other vehicle differences are the American 'motorcycle', 'station wagon', and 'truck' against the British 'motorbike', 'estate (car)', and 'lorry'. Reminding that British people also drive on the opposite side to Americans, in the UK, the term 'outside lane' refers to the higher speed passing lane closest to the centre of the road, while the term 'inside lane' refers to the lane closer to the edge. In American English these terms have the opposite meaning.

As regards other street objects, 'parking meter', 'pedestrian', and 'traffic' are shared by the two varieties. However, Americans use the terms 'crosswalk', 'gas station', 'overpass', 'sidewalk', and 'stoplight' and British 'pedestrian crossing/zebra crossing', 'petrol station', 'flyover', 'pavement', and 'traffic lights' respectively, only to mention the most evident differences.

2.1.3. Shopping

Going shopping might be quite confusing in the two countries if some lexical differences are unknown. First of all, the nouns 'shop' and 'store' are used somewhat differently in American and British English. In general, Americans use 'store' the way British use 'shop'. Most British 'shops' would be called 'stores' in the US where the noun 'shop' is more often used to mean a small retail establishment, such as an 'antique shop' or a 'gift shop'. British go to the 'chemist's', while Americans go to a

‘drugstore’ or a ‘pharmacy’, where they can buy medicines and other items, such as body care products, stationary, and cigarettes.

To describe clothing, many differences have a one to one equivalent, such as the American ‘bathrobe’, ‘nightgown’, ‘sneakers’, and ‘tuxedo’, which are ‘dressing gown’, ‘nightdress’, ‘trainers’, and ‘dinner jacket’ in British. In other cases, the same word has a different meaning: the word ‘jumper’ exists in both American and British English, but British use the word ‘jumper’ for knitted clothing that covers the top half of the body whereas for Americans it is a sleeveless dress worn over shirt or a blouse. The British ‘vest’ is an American ‘undershirt’, and what Americans mean with ‘vest’, is the British ‘waistcoat’.

2.1.4. Food

Recipes demonstrate how many differences in food and cooking terminology there are. For instance, a British ‘biscuit’ is an American ‘cookie’, and American ‘biscuit’ is a British ‘scone’. Also some fruit and vegetables terms are different, such as the American ‘eggplants’ and ‘blueberries’ which in British are ‘aubergines’ and ‘bilberries’.

Furthermore, American and British use the same words for most categories of meat as beef, pork, and lamb; the differences are for specific meat dishes, as the *MED* explains:

For example, what the British call a joint (a large piece of meat, such as a leg of lamb or loin of pork, cooked in an oven and eaten with potatoes and other vegetables) is known as a roast in the U.S. Most Americans would be shocked to hear that the Sunday joint is a British family tradition. To Americans, a joint is not something that people roast, but something that they smoke: a marijuana cigarette.

Some others are ‘chop’, ‘ground meat’, and ‘tenderloin steak’ which in British are called ‘cutlet’, ‘minced meat’, and ‘fillet steak’. As regards seafood, what Americans call ‘shrimp’ are ‘prawns’ in Britain; other examples are the American ‘canned tuna’, ‘crawfish’, and ‘fish sticks’ that for the British are ‘tinned tuna’, ‘crayfish’, and ‘fish fingers’.

2.1.5. Numbers

Finally, the system of saying and writing numbers is a little different. The British insert ‘and’ before the tens and the units, as in ‘two hundred and

fifty'. Americans are more likely to read numbers like 1,456 as 'fourteen fifty-six' instead of 'one thousand, four hundred and fifty-six', unless they are referring to years.

Also monetary vocabulary is often said differently. For amounts over the dollar, an American would say both dollars and cents or drop both denominations as in 'three twenty' or 'three dollars and twenty cents' for \$3.20. In Great Britain the form 'three pounds twenty' is the most heard. The British slang form 'quid' is a sort of equivalent of the American 'buck' for the round amounts, as in 50 'quid', or fifty 'bucks'.

Nowadays we are assisting to a certain change, as the American variety is not taking over, but at least resulting more known by British English speakers as a result of globalisation and the spread of new media. The *MED* has noticed that:

While American and British English show some differences in vocabulary related to shopping and other common activities, all evidence suggests that the two varieties of the language are moving closer together. The movement is mostly eastward. Each year, more words that were once exclusively American are found in the spoken and written language of both Britain and the U.S.

The next session will attempt to verify this hypothesis through a linguistic survey proposed to American and British native speakers

3. American Vs British Reciprocal Comprehension Test

3.1. Method And Sample

To verify how well American and British native speakers understand each other and whether they are aware of the lexical differences between the two varieties, a survey has been led among speakers of the two varieties. For this survey, the sample was asked to complete a questionnaire by writing the American equivalent of the British words proposed and vice versa for the British-speaking sample. The experiment used a questionnaire elaborated choosing the items from the examples of vocabulary differences described in this work, for a total of 45 items for each variety of English. Of course, the research has no presumption of generalization, because of the limited sample made up of 50 respondents for each variety. The native speakers were contacted through social

networks, and asked to compile the questionnaire anonymously. All respondents were informed about the aims of the research, and asked to fill in the questionnaire only on the basis of their own knowledge, without using dictionaries. Demographic questions were also included to gather data relating to the samples' age, sex, occupation, level of education, and whether they had ever been to Great Britain or had British friends. The same survey was given to British English speakers, asking them the same items in American English.

3.2. Data Analysis Procedure

A first analysis divided the compiled questionnaires according to demographic data:

All respondents ranged from 11 to 60 years old. The American respondents included 37 women and 13 men, while the British sample was composed of 34 women and 16 men. Both samples were mostly between 30 and 40 years old, as can be seen in the comparative table below:

<i>AGE</i>								
<i>American sample</i>					<i>British sample</i>			
11-1	28-6	29-3	30-2		25-5	27-3	28-1	29-6
31-0	32-2	33-2	34-2		31-2	32-0	35-3	36-2
35-0	36-0	37-4	38-4		37-4	38-1	40-2	41-0
39-4	40-1	41-1	42-1		42-3	43-0	44-0	45-2
43-0	44-3	45-0	46-0		46-1	47-0	48-0	49-0
47-0	48-1	49-1	50-3		50-2	51-1	52-4	53-1
51-0	52-0	53-1	54-2		54-2	55-0	56-0	57-2
55-3	56-0	57-1	58-1		58-0	59-1	60-2	
59-0	60-1							

Table 1: US/UK respondents' age

As far as concerns educational levels, both samples had a majority of college degrees (BA and MA). Specifically, the American sample included 1 elementary school student, 2 respondents holding a high school diploma, 23 Bachelor's, 19 Master's, and 5 PhDs.

Also the British sample was composed of a majority of master's and bachelor's degrees, specifically 7 respondents with a high school diploma, 24 ba's, 11 ma's, and 8 PhDs. Therefore, the two samples were quite homogeneous and having quite a high educational level.

The respondents were also asked to specify whether they had any contacts with speakers of the other variety or if they had been to the other country.

As far as concerns contact with the other country, the American sample had less contacts, acquaintances, or British friends (19/50) compared with the British sample (34/50). Though having less British friends, the American sample reported to have visited the UK (38/50) more than the British sample had visited the US (17/50), mostly because the American sample was mainly composed of US armed forces employees and their families stationed in Italy; thus many American families have visited Great Britain while staying in Europe.

As far as concerns occupations, the respondents' occupations have been grouped in 8 categories, as can be seen in Table 2 below. In both groups, most respondents worked in the educational and armed forces field.

<i>OCCUPATION</i>		
<i>FIELD</i>	<i>American sample</i>	<i>British sample</i>
Medical field	9	3
Educational field	11	13
Professionals	3	5
Arts	4	2
Armed forces	15	13
Housewives	5 of which 3 are students	6
Students	1	5
Unemployed	2	3

Table 2: UK/US respondents' occupations

Finally, as the same items were given to the two samples, using British items for the US sample and the American equivalents for the British sample, the answers to the questionnaires were compared. Table 3 below reports the items of the questionnaire. The first item in the couple is the American variant.

<i>ITEM</i>	<i>Americans' Correct Answers</i>	<i>Brit.</i>	<i>ITEM</i>	<i>Americans' correct answers</i>	<i>Brit.</i>
Trainers/sneakers	34	43	Tights/Pantyhose	17	17
Caretaker/Janitor	13	32	Mad/Crazy	28	29
Waistcoat/vest	10	24	Nappy/Diaper	23	41
Zebra	33	36	Lorry/ truck	17	46

crossing/crosswalk				
Bunch/ pigtail	0	26	Trousers/Pants	37 39
Chicory/endive	7	18	Bonnet/hood	30 23
Braces/suspenders	13	29	Dummy/ pacifier	8 15
Jumper/sweater	20	33	Mackintosh/raincoat	13 45
Clothes horse/drying rack	4	34	Chemists/Pharmisist	36 46
Pavement/Side walk	11	32	Power point/ electrical outlet	4 8
Pram/carriage or baby stroller	35	16	Marrow/squash	1 6
Fruit machine/slot machine	1	37	Rubber/eraser	17 40
Draughts/checkers	1	23	Parka/ Anorak	41 15
Quid/ 'bucks'	27	31	Cooker/Stove	25 29
Wally/ prick	3	7	Dressing gown/robe, bathrobe	14 37
Cling film/plastic Wrap	33	35	Serviette/napkin	24 31
Zed bed/foldable bed	3	7	Noughts and crosses/tic tac toe	16 31
Estate car/station wagon	6	21	Aubergine/Eggplant	28 43
Coach (not sports)/ bus	16	34	Underground/Subway	36 40
Prawn/Shrimp	37	32	Cot/crib	7 20
Fags/Cigarettes	45	10	Flyover/overpass	9 19
Flannel/washcloth	2	9	Trolley/shopping cart	16 39
full stop/period	9	15		

Table 3: US/UK questionnaire

3.3. Results and Conclusions

The analysis of the results indicate that there are some differences that seem to be known by both varieties, and that the items can be divided into several groups.

One group is composed of well known differences such as 'trainers/sneakers', 'zebra crossing/crosswalk', 'chemists/pharmacist', 'trousers/pants', 'cling film/plastic wrap', 'aubergine/eggplant', 'prawn/shrimp', and 'underground/subway'. They are equally known by speakers of both varieties.

Another group is composed of items which seem to have a complete obscure meaning for Americans. For instance, 'waistcoat/vest', 'nappy/diaper', 'chicory/endive', 'braces/suspenders', 'clothes horse/ drying

rack', 'pavement/side walk', 'fruit machine/slot machine', 'rubber/eraser', 'draughts/checkers', 'dressing gown/robe, bathrobe', 'zed bed/foldable bed', 'estate car/station wagon', 'cot/crib', 'flyover/overpass', 'flannel/washcloth', and 'full stop/period'.

Some of the items were peculiar only to one variety and have been hardly recognized even by the part of sample which has specified to have high educational degrees, such as 'dummy/ pacifier', 'mackintosh/ rain coat', 'power point/ electrical outlet', 'wally/ prick', 'flannel/ washcloth', 'marrow/squash', and 'bunch/ pigtail'. The last two items were barely known by 1 or 2 respondents for both varieties. In the case of 'Mackintosh' and 'power point', the sample was quite confused, as the respondents thought the items were referring to the computer sciences field.

Some words which are typically taught as examples of US/UK differences were also quite obscure for the US sample, such as 'lorry/truck', 'coach / bus', and 'full stop/period'. Others were particularly well known, such as 'fags/cigarettes' and 'trousers/pants', maybe because the respondents were well aware of the different meaning that the words have in the US. In fact, in American English, the word 'fag' is used as a pejorative slang word for 'homosexual', and 'pants' means 'underwear' in the UK. It must also be said that 'cigarettes' is more used in the UK than 'fags' nowadays.

Positive results have been gained principally by the part of the sample which specified to have been in direct contact with the other country, or living in the New Hampshire- New England area, which still shares vocabulary with the former motherland.

The general thought that British have more knowledge of American lexicon than vice versa is very evident. British chose more correct answers than Americans. This is the case of items like 'caretaker/janitor', 'waistcoat/vest', 'zebra crossing/crosswalk', 'nappy/diaper', 'lorry/ truck', 'bunch/ pigtail', 'braces/suspenders', 'pavement/side walk', 'clothes horse/drying rack', 'fruit machine/slot machine', 'rubber/eraser', 'quid/ 'bucks'', 'dressing gown/robe, bathrobe', 'cling film/plastic wrap', 'serviette/napkin', 'noughts and crosses/tic tac toe', 'estate car/station wagon', 'trolley/shopping cart', 'aubergine/eggplant', and 'coach/ bus'.

It must be said that in some cases, the American variant uses expressions that are quite intuitive to understand such as 'crosswalk', 'suspenders', 'drying rack', 'slot machine', 'overpass', and 'shopping cart'. Their British equivalents are not so self-evident.

Of course, this is a limited test; however, it might be that British gained higher scores because they have more possibilities of contact with American English because of American films and TV programmes, though not having visited the other country as much as the American sample. On the opposite, the transmission of British TV programmes is rarer in the States. Many dictionaries, such as the *Collins English Dictionary*, the *Oxford* and the *American Heritage Dictionary*'s recent editions specify the lexical differences indicating the equivalent in the two varieties.

However, it can be thought that the two educational systems give little importance to the study of the other variety, not only in L2 English teaching, but also within the two countries. The results of the questionnaire demonstrate that reciprocal knowledge of the lexical differences between the two varieties is far away from a good level.

As language is the soul of a culture, major awareness can be a strategy to improve mutual intelligibility and respect between the two cultures. All these differences raise questions about what can truly be considered 'correct' English, and even if it is right to talk about a 'proper' or 'improper' English variety.

Language controls the way of thinking, and people from different cultures have different views of the world imposed on them by language. To say it in Sapir's (1929:69) words:

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered representing the same reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct works, not merely the same worlds with different labels.

Therefore, it can be said that only a direct contact with the other language or a specific study on the differences can improve mutual intelligibility between the two varieties of English, admitting and respecting their differences.

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